



**TESTO**



**JUNKIE**

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**BEATRIZ PRECIADO**

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**SEX, DRUGS, AND BIOPOLITICS IN  
THE PHARMACOPORNOGRAPHIC ERA**

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“Inventive, daring, and blindingly lucid, Beatriz Preciado  
opens a new branch of philosophical practice.”

—AVITAL RONELL, author of *CRACK WARS*

## 12. THE MICROPOLITICS OF GENDER IN THE PHARMACOPORNOGRAPHIC ERA: EXPERIMENTATION, VOLUNTARY INTOXICATION, MUTATION

*The old hegemonic grammarians—including the sexologists—had lost control of gender and its proliferating siblings.*

—DONNA J. HARAWAY

*So now we're standing on the side of freaks. Now what? If we can't call the freaks names anymore because we realize we're one of them, then we have to look back at our position as a former insider, and we begin to devalue that. We've now officially become activists. But outside or inside, it's still a side; and taking a side usually means taking the identity of a side, and there you have identity politics as one more rendering of a game called us-versus-them. In "transgender politics," as in any other identity politics, we look around for a "them." From the standpoint of the transgender person, there's no shortage of "them," no shortage at all.*

—KATE BORNSTEIN

*We want to reclaim our gender, redefine our bodies and create free and open networks in which we can realize our potential, where anyone at all will be able to construct their security mechanisms against the injunctions of gender. We aren't victims, our battle wounds are our shields. . . . We do not come forward as terrorists but as pirates, trapeze artists, warriors, gender dissidents. . . . We champion uncertainty, believe in the possibility of "looking back" as if it were a step forward; we think that no process of construction should be imposed as*

*irreversible. We want to make the beauty of androgyny visible. We believe in our right to get rid of our bandages to be able to breathe, or never to remove them; in our right to be operated on by good surgeons and not by BUTCHERS; in free access to hormonal treatments without having to resort to psychiatric permission forms; in our right to self-medicate with hormones. We demand the right to live without getting anyone's permission.*

—GUERRILLA TRAVOLAKA, BARCELONA

## POSTQUEER MICROPOLITICS

The frontiers of contemporary metropolises (Los Angeles, London, New York, Bombay, Paris, Berlin, Singapore, etc.) don't coincide with the geographic limits of modern cities. You can think you're outside them when you're inside, or believe you're inside without having been in contact for a single moment with the virtual density of the pharmacoporno-megalopolis. I went to New York in 1993 to escape the educational and cultural institutions of post-Franco Spain, where a lesbian feminist (which was how I defined myself at the time, using the limited political and discursive references that were available to me then) had little to do. At the turn of the past century, New York was one of the centers of the sprawling pharmacopornographic empire. But it was also a vortex of networks of emerging critical and political strategies that transcended frontiers and languages in their attempts to resist and dismantle the dominant order.

When I moved to Paris in 1999, I came to live in an east-

ern suburb of the pharmacopornographic empire, where people speak French. And I came to transcribe in that language (which wasn't mine either) some of the queer dialects I'd seen emerging a few years before. To begin with, this consisted of transferring to other parts of the world the power of discourses of resistance that were fermenting on the fringes of the pharmacopornopolis. Thus, one might also say, New York is not a place but, to put it in Spivak's words, a regime of cultural translation. And therefore, paradoxically, I began living in New York when I left that city.

The austere, sick, and disenchanting 1990s, which lacked the radicalism of the 1970s and the disco glamour of the early 1980s, would be the decade of the proliferation of queer micropolitics. At the end of the 1980s, an array of dyke, fag, drag queen, transgender, and transsexual groups (Queer Nation, Gran Fury, Fierce Pussy, Radical Fairy, ACT UP, and the Lesbian Avengers, to name the best known) scattered throughout the United States and England were rebelling against efforts at assimilation into the dominant heterosexual society by gay and lesbian identity politics. They transformed the street into a space for the "theatricalization of political rage"<sup>1</sup> and adopted a hyperbolic performative style as a way of contesting the heterosexual norm.<sup>2</sup>

1. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 233.

2. cf. Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire (FHAR), *Rapport contre la normalité* (Paris: Champ Libre, 1971); Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Guy Hocquenghem, *The Screwball Asses*, trans. Noura Wedell (New York: Semiotext(e), 2009). The first of these shifts came from early French queer theorists such as Guy Hocquenghem, René Scherer, and Monique Wittig. Despite the diversity of their critical backgrounds, from Marxism to Foucauldian genealogy, their interpretation of the normalization of bodies and practices in the Western democracies result in a definition of "heterosexuality" as a "political regime."

At the same time, feminism mutated through a decentering of its political subject that simultaneously and transversely questioned the natural and universal character of the female condition.

Judith Butler shed light on the processes of discursive cultural signification and stylization of the body through which the differences between the genders become normalized, while Donna J. Haraway and Anne Fausto-Sterling questioned the existence of two sexes as biological realities that are independent of the technoscientific processes of the construction of bodies and their representation. Moreover, in conjunction with the emancipatory struggles of African Americans and the decolonization of the “Third World,” critical voices had just been raised against the presuppositions of white, colonial feminism. Angela Davis, bell hooks, Patricia J. Williams, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Gayatri Spivak . . . were defining projects to decolonize feminism, which obliged theorists and activists to think about complex systems of the unequal distribution of life chances and of violence involving race, gender, sex, sexuality, illness, class, migration, disability . . .<sup>3</sup>

Dissident forms of feminism were becoming visible as

3. Gloria Hull, Patricia Scott and Barbara Smith, eds., *But Some of Us Are Brave: All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Woman of Color Press, 1983); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in *Marxism & the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271–313; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987); Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ed., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

the subaltern subjects excluded from liberal white heterosexual feminism began to denounce the processes of normalization and repression inherent in their political and discursive strategies. Such purges had led to a colorless, normative, and puritanical form of feminism that saw cultural, sexual, or political differences as threats against the heterosexual, Eurocentric feminine ideal. From such issues, a host of new forms of feminism emerged—feminisms for freaks, collective projects of transformation for the twenty-first century. In a return to Virginie Despentes's thesis,<sup>4</sup> we could speak of the critical awakening of the "proletariat of feminism," populated by nonwhite women, dykes, raped women, gender-dissidents, the HIV-positive, transgender and transsexual people, fat people, immigrants, crips . . . most of us, in fact.

While queer theorists formulated gender performativity and queer activists resisted the disciplinary side effects of gay and lesbian identity politics, activists in ACT UP invented the first strategies of what, in the context of neoliberalism, could already be called "anti-pharmacopornographic activism": fighting AIDS became fighting the biopolitical and cultural apparatuses of the production of the AIDS syndrome—which include biomedical models, advertising campaigns, governmental and nongovernmental health organizations, genome-sequencing programs, pharmacological industries, intellectual property, bio patents, trademarks, definitions of risk groups, clinical assays and protocols . . .

4. Despentes, *King Kong Theory*, 10.

One of the most productive shifts will emerge directly from circles formerly considered to represent the dregs of female victimization, from which feminism was hoping that no critical discourse could arise. The circles in question were composed of sex workers, porn actresses, and the sexually rebellious. The movements created by sex revolts achieved discursive and political structuring in the 1980s when feminist debates against pornography exploded in the United States, a phenomenon that came to be known as the “sex wars.” Enter Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, spokeswomen for antisex feminism, who’ll label pornography the prime example of the political and sexual oppression of women.<sup>5</sup> Using a slogan created by Robin Morgan, “Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice,” they will condemn the representation of female sexuality as a practice that promotes gender violence and the sexual and political submission of women; and they will call for the legal abolition of pornography and prostitution.<sup>6</sup>

In 1981, Ellen Willis, one of the pioneers of American feminist rock journalism, critiques the complicity of such abolitionist feminism with the patriarchal structures in heterosexual society that repress and control women’s bodies. For Willis, when abolitionist feminists ask the state to regulate the representation of sexuality, they are granting

5. Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (London: Women’s Press, 1981); see also MacKinnon, *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women’s Equality* (Minneapolis: Organizing Against Pornography, 1998).

6. Robin Morgan, “Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape,” in *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1978). Cited in Alice Echols, “The Taming of the Id: Feminist Sexual Politics, 1968–1983,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (New York: Routledge, 1984), 50–72.

too much power to a patriarchal institution whose historical goal has always been the subjugation of the female body and the reinforcement of the masculine gaze and enjoyment. The perverse outcomes of the antipornography movement will become apparent in Canada, when laws based on feminist criteria that are used to repress the representation of sexuality are applied to the first censored films and publications, which turn out to be about sexual *minorities*<sup>7</sup>—more specifically, about lesbians (because of the presence of dildos) and about S&M sexualities (regarded by the state commission as violent and hurtful to women). On the other hand, stereotypical representations of women in heterosexual porn are not condemned by the commission.

The sex workers movement reacted to antiporn feminism by declaring the state incapable of protecting us from pornography. The decoding of representation is always an open semiotic task that does not require protection; rather it is something that must be approached with reflection, critical discourse, and political action. Willis would be the first to call “pro-sex feminism” the sexopolitical movement that categorizes female pleasure and the female body as political spaces of resistance to the control and normalization of sexuality. In parallel, the Californian prostitute Scarlot Harlot will use the expression *sex worker* to define prostitution, demanding professionalization and equal rights for whores in the labor market. The prostitutes of

7. The meaning of minority I'm using here is not a reference to the statistical meaning of the term, but to that of a revolutionary reservoir of political transformation, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari.



San Francisco (who have gathered together to form COYOTE, a movement to defend the rights of whores founded by the sex worker Margot Saint James), members of PONY (Prostitutes of New York), some HIV activists from ACT UP, and some radical lesbians and sadomasochists (calling themselves the Lesbian Avengers, SAMOIS, etc.) quickly form a coalition with Willis and Harlot. Beginning in the 1990s, in Spain and France, the sex worker movement, led by the groups Hetaira (Madrid), Cabiria (Lyon), Grisélidis (Toulouse), and LICIT (Barcelona) and represented by such activists as Christina Garaizabal, Empar Pineda, Dolores Juliano, Raquel Osborne, Grisélidis Réal, Claire Carthoney, and Françoise Guillemaut, form a European unit to defend the rights of male and female sex workers.

This “post-porn”<sup>8</sup> and self-reflective feminism was able to find a space for activism within audiovisual productions, literature, and performance. With the feminist postporn films of Annie Sprinkle; the documentaries and fictional films of Monika Treut; the literature of Virginie Despentes, Dorothy Allison, and Kathy Acker; the comic strips of Alison Bechdel; the photography of Del LaGrace Volcano and Axelle Ledauphin; the performances of Diana Pornoterrorista, Post-Op, and Lady Pain; the queer performances of Tim Stüttgen; the zines and ready-made politics of Dana Wise; the wild concerts of Tribe 8, Le Tigre, or Chicks on Speed; the neo-Goth sermons of Lydia Lunch; and the transgender science fiction porn of Shu Lea Cheang, an entire transnational postporn trans-feminist aesthetic was

8. I am using here Annie Sprinkle’s politicization of Wink van Kempen’s notion “post-porn” modernist. See Annie Sprinkle, *Post-Porn Modernist* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998).

created that trafficked in signs and cultural artifacts and critically resignified normative codes considered by traditional feminism to be inappropriate for femininity. This aesthetic and political discourse drew its references from horror or porn films; Gothic literature; sex toys; vampires and monsters; mangas; pagan divinities; cyborgs; punk music; political interventions in public spaces; sex with machines; anarcofeminist icons like the riot grrrls; ultrasex lesbian parodies of drag king masculinity like Diane Torr; Océan LeRoy, Shelly Mars, and Antonia Baehr; and transsexual performers and artists like Lazlo Pearlman and Hans Scheirl.

However, the word *queer*, which was culturally translated and served for several years as a name that referred to various struggles occurring in Anglo-Saxon and European countries, has been subjected today to a growing process of reification and commercialization (processes belonging to the pharmacopornographic order). In the past few years, *queer* has been recodified by the dominant discourses.<sup>9</sup> We are currently facing the risk of turning the term into a description of a neoliberal, free market identity that generates new exclusions and hides the specific conditions of the oppression of transsexual, transgender people, crip, or racialized bodies. It is not a matter of choosing an oppositional biological or historical subject (whether it be *women*, *homosexuals*, *blacks*, etc. . . .) that could function as a main-spring for revolutionary transformation and the statistical sum of multicultural minority differences. Nor do I mean

9. To mention only one of these rehabilitations of the term: In 1998, the TV producer Thierry Ardisson registered the term *queer* at the Institut National de L'Industrie in France.

that we already can no longer use the term *queer*; I merely mean that it has lost a large part of its subversive energy and can no longer serve as today's common denominator to describe the proliferation of strategies of resistance to categories of gender and the normalization of sexuality as well as to the processes of industrialization and privatization of the body as "product." In reaction to this process of the capitalization of genderqueer identities, inside minority subcultures, transsexuals, transgender, and crip people and racial minorities are asking us to pay attention to the body's materiality, to the management of its vulnerability, and to the cultural construction of possibilities for survival within processes of subjugation and political organization.<sup>10</sup> Today we can understand the enunciation of *queer* as a critical moment in a wider process of the production of a trans-feminist critical politics and the construction of dissident subjectivities within the pharmacopornographic regime. The trans-feminist movement that has come out of the queer critique is spreading through fragile but extensive networks, leading to strategic alliances and synthetic links; it circulates like a political antidote that infiltrates the very circuits of global capitalism.

Tony Negri and Michael Hardt have described the contemporary world as a single, delocalized, interconnected city with centers of intensity; circuits through which capital, bodies, and information circulate; zones of luxurious comfort and pauperized zones; and remote places for the

10. See Judith Butler, *Bodies*, 27–55; see also chaps. 3, 4, and 8, in *Undoing Gender*. Butler herself, whose texts were read at the beginning of the 90s as critical foundations of "queer theory," is qualifying her performative interpretation of identity to emphasize the specificity of the material and discursive processes that produce intersexual or transsexual corporality.

production and evacuation of material and semiotic detritus. We live in a sort of punk cyber-Gothic Middle Ages of the bio-information empire. During a certain time, our gurus defined as “postmodernity” that planetary invagination, although it was a techno-porno-punk zenith of modernity. We are at a point of historical inflection in which modernity is puking up its repugnant ejaculatory potential; we’re swimming in nuclear semen in which we are learning to breathe like mutant beasts. The difference between the Roman Empire and our techno-porno-punk global empire is that we no longer possess any ontotheological foundation. Some will think that contemporary civilization has substituted an industrial or ergot-like foundation for ontotheology. However, neither work nor production is enough to explain the present-day functioning of our societies. The contemporary techno-porno-punk empire relies on new slogans: “Consume and die,” “Have an orgasm and make war.” And don’t forget to continue to consume and to come after your death. This is the thanato-pornographic foundation of this new empire.

We are not talking about a dark age—not living in some dim postmodernity—but are talking, rather, about the glittering age of porn. It’s already not about the dawn of time but about an atmosphere that is completely illuminated, a pervasive gas saturated with moist images. In the middle of this dazzling confusion, concepts such as “lucidity,” “illumination,” “clarity,” and “obviousness” blaze with a new obscurity. According to neurobiologists, there are four states of consciousness: lucidity, obnubilation, somnolence, and coma. When lucid, the subject is present to itself

and to the surrounding environment; when obnubilated, the subject's eyes are open, but he or she is disoriented in terms of space and time and relatively indifferent to self and environment; when somnolent, the subject's eyes are closed but he or she still reacts to direct stimuli. In a coma, the subject reacts neither to direct nor indirect stimuli but may remain present to self. Our presence to ourselves as a species could be described today as prosthetico-comatose. We've closed our eyes, but we continue to see by means of an array of technologies, political implants that we call life, culture, civilization. It is, however, only through the strategic reappropriation of these biotechnological apparatuses that it is possible to invent resistance, to risk revolution.

## **SNUFF POLITICS**

The fact is that we're being fucked right off the bat: becoming a punk civilization. The sudden emergence of the punk movement in 1977 was not a simple microphenomenon, but the last lucid explosion of what seems today to be the only ideal shared by the members of what has been called the human species: the pleasure instinct as a death instinct. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, no cultural production has entailed such a punk dimension as much as snuff has—the filming of death (or its representation) as it happens. In popular culture, *snuff* refers to those films that show the murder of a person or animal with the unique objective of making that death visible, transforming it into public, marketable representation.

Everything, in fact, begins as something sham. In 1971, Z-series directors Michael and Roberta Findlay made *The Slaughter*, a small-budget film production that combined erotic scenes with horror scenes. That same year, Ed Sanders interviewed Charles Manson. Manson claimed to have recorded some of the celebrity murders perpetrated by his followers under his authority. No trace of such films were found, but the myth of snuff was born. In 1972, the distributor Alan Shackleton got ahold of *The Slaughter*, added a last scene in which one of the actresses is disemboweled (fictionally) in front of the camera, and rereleased this new edit under the title *Snuff*. The premiere of the film took place in 1976 and provoked an unprecedented debate over the verity of the actress's death. Antiporn groups, pro-censorship feminists, and the media took part in this debate. The film, which had no other cinematographic or narrative interest outside the evisceration scene, would garner unexpected profits.

As a questioning of representational limits, snuff has served as a pornographic paradigm for both pro-censorship feminists and antiporn Christians, and also as a formal model of realism to which the dramatization of sex in pornography must tend: a film is that much more pornographic if the sexual scene that is filmed is real, in the same way that a representation is snuff when the crime has *actually* taken place. Radically postmodern, the notion of snuff is opposed to the dramatic or simulated and mimetic quality of all representation. On the contrary, it affirms the performative power of representation to modify reality, or a desire for the real to exist in and by representation. This brings us

to the theatrical relationship between pornography, snuff, and politics. Today, some snuff film catalogs offer images filmed by Allied or Nazi soldiers in concentration camps, Zapruder's film of the John F. Kennedy assassination, the film of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, videos of the executions of prisoners of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, videos showing the American army destroying Iraqi villages, images of the destruction of New York's Twin Towers and of the execution of Saddam Hussein. Politics has become snuff: extermination by and for representation.

The mushroom cloud left in the sky by the atomic bomb, the photograph of the completely naked little girl running away from the Vietnam village Trang Bang in flames after a napalm attack, the sperm-filled lips of Linda Lovelace, piles of mutilated limbs in Rwanda, double penetration, the terrifying feats performed in *Big Brother* and the surgical scenes in *Nip/Tuck*, the liters of fat suctioned from the buttocks of American housewives for the cameras of *Extreme Make-over*, murders at the maximum-security San Quentin State Prison filmed by security cameras—all of them say more about the current state of our species than any philosophy book of the twentieth century, from Husserl to Sartre. The distinctive feature of the *techno-porno-punk* moment is *snuff politics*: rip away everything from life to the point of death and film the process, record it in writing and image, distribute it live over the Internet, make it permanently accessible in a virtual archive, an advertising medium on the global scale. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, our species had literally stuck good philosophical intentions up our

ass, filming the thing before marketing the images from it. The philosophy of the pharmacopornographic regime has been reduced to an enormous, dripping butt-plug camera. In such circumstances, the philosophy of such high-punk modernity can only be autotheory, autoexperimentation, auto-techno-penetration, pornology.

When surmising about the future of the planet, Donna J. Haraway encourages us to avoid two kinds of narrative traps of the metaphysical and semiotico-fascist kind. First, there is the messianic temptation: someone will come to save us—some unique religious or technical force, an all-powerful understanding that possesses all the answers needed to transform the human condition. Second, there is the apocalyptic temptation: nothing can be done, and the disappearance of the species is imminent. Haraway tells us, “We might profitably learn to doubt our fears and certainties of disasters as much as our dreams of progress. We might learn to live without the bracing discourses of salvation history.”<sup>11</sup> The problem resides precisely in the fact that no one will come to save us and that we are still some distance from our inevitable disappearance. It will thus be necessary to think about doing something while we are on the way out, undergoing mutation or changing planets, even if this something consists in intentionally accelerating our own disappearance, mutation, or cosmic displacement. Let us be worthy of our own fall and imagine for the time left the components of a new pornopunk philosophy.

11. Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 45.



## THE PRINCIPLE OF THE AUTO-GUINEA PIG

The first principle of a trans-feminism movement capable of facing *porno-punk* modernity: the fact that your body, the body of the *multitude* and the pharmacopornographic networks that constitute them are political laboratories, both effects of the process of subjection and control and potential spaces for political agency and critical resistance to normalization. I am pleading here for an array of politics of physical experimentation and semiotextology that (in the face of the principle of political representation, which dominates our social life and is at the core of political mass movements, which can be as totalitarian as they are democratic) will be regulated by the principle that—in accordance with Peter Sloterdijk’s intuitions—I will call the “principle of the auto-guinea pig.”<sup>12</sup>

In China, in 213 BC, all books were burned by order of the emperor. In the fifth century, after a series of wars had ransacked and decimated the library at Alexandria, it was accused of harboring pagan teachings contrary to the Christian faith and was destroyed by the decree of Emperor Theodosius. The greatest center of research, translation, and reading disappeared. Between 1330 and 1730, thousands of human bodies were burned during the Inquisition, thousands of books were destroyed, and hundreds of works related to the expertise and production of subjectivity were relegated to oblivion or to the underground. In 1813,

12. In his interview with Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, Peter Sloterdijk evokes “voluntary intoxication” and “auto-guinea pig” techniques in reference to Samuel Hahnemann; see Peter Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun Nor Death*. With Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, trans. Steven Corcoran (New York: Semiotext(e), 2011).

American soldiers took York (now Toronto) and burned the parliament and legislative library. A year later, the Library of Congress was razed. In 1933, one of the first actions of the Nazi government was the destruction of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Research) in Berlin. Created in 1919 by Magnus Hirschfeld, this center had for years played a role in the research and dissemination of progressive ideas and practices concerning sex and sexuality. Twenty thousand books from the Hirschfeld Institute were burned on May 10, 1933, on Opernplatz on a gigantic pyre whose flashing flames were imprinted on the camera film of Hitler's reporters. On the night of March 9, 1943, an air raid on a library in Aachen destroyed five hundred thousand books. In 1993, Croatian militia destroyed dozens of libraries (among them, those in Stolac). In 2003, American bombs and Saddam loyalists sacked and destroyed the National Library of Baghdad<sup>13</sup> . . .

The theorico-political innovations produced during the past forty years by feminism, the black liberation movement, and queer and transgender theory do seem to be lasting acquisitions. However, in the context of global war, this collection of scholarship could be destroyed also, as fast as a microchip melting under intense heat. Before all the existing fragile archives about feminism and black, queer, and trans culture have been reduced to a state of radioactive shades, it is indispensable to transform such minority knowledge into collective experimentation, into physical

13. On the destruction of the books, see Fernando Baez, *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern-day Iraq*, trans. Alfred MacAdam (New York: Atlas & Co., 2008).

practice, into ways of life and forms of cohabitation. We are no longer pleading, like our predecessors in the 1970s and 1980s, for an understanding of life and history as effects of different discursive regimes. We are pleading to use discursive productions as stakeholders in a wider process of the technical materialization of life that is occurring on the planet. A materialization that each day resembles more and more a total technical destruction of all animal, vegetable, and cultural forms of life and that will end, undoubtedly, in the annihilation of the planet and the self-extinction of most of its species. Alas, it will become a matter of finding ways to record a planetary suicide.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, self-experimentation was still a part of the research protocols of pharmacology. Animal experimentation was not yet called into question, but an ethical precept dictated that the researcher take on the risk of unknown effects on his or her own body before enacting any test on the body of another human. Relying on the rhetoric of objectivity, the subject of scientific learning would progressively attempt to generate knowledge outside him- or herself, to exempt his or her body from the agonies of self-experimentation. In 1790, the physician Samuel Hahnemann self-administered strong daily doses of quinine in order to observe its effects in fighting malaria. His body reacted by developing symptoms that resembled the remittent fever characteristic of malaria. The experiment would serve as the basis for the invention of the homeopathic movement, which, based on the law of similars, maintains that it is possible to treat illness using minute doses of a substance that, in much larger

amounts, would provoke the same symptoms of that illness in a healthy body, in the manner of a therapeutic mirror. Peter Sloterdijk, inspired by Hahnemann, will call the process of controlled and intentional poisoning “voluntary auto-intoxication” and will sum it up as follows: “If you intend to be a doctor, you must try to become a laboratory animal.”<sup>14</sup>

In order to transform conventional frameworks of the “cultural intelligibility”<sup>15</sup> of human bodies, it is necessary to evolve toward practices of voluntary autointoxication. From Novalis to Ritter, the romanticism from which Sloterdijk draws his inspiration for a counterproject to modernity will make autoexperimentation the central technique of the self in a dystopian society. Nevertheless, romantic autoexperimentation carries the risk of individualism and depolitization. On the other hand, two of the discourses around which the critique of modern European subjectivity will develop—those of Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin—will begin under the form of the invention of new techniques of the self and repertoires of practices of voluntary intoxication. But the dominant discourse of disciplinary modernity will brush them aside; the process of institutionalization that both psychoanalysis and the Frankfurt School will experience will go hand in hand with the pathologizing of intoxication and the clinical industrialization of experimentation.

“It would be a good thing if a doctor were able to test many more drugs on himself,” declared the young doctor

14. Peter Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun Nor Death*. With Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, trans. Steven Corcoran (New York: Semiotext(e), 2011), 8.

15. I’m reclaiming Judith Butler’s term here. See *Undoing Gender*, 35–46.

Mikhail Bulgakov in 1914, in “Morphine,” a text in which the protagonist describes the effects of morphine on his own body.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, it seems urgent today, from the perspective of a trans-feminist project, to use our living bodies as biopolitical platforms to test the pharmacopolitical effects of synthetic sex hormones in order to create and demarcate new frameworks of cultural intelligibility for gender and sexual subjects. In an era in which pharmaceutical laboratories and corporations and state medico-legal institutions are controlling and regulating the use of gender and sex biocodes (the active molecules of progesterone, estrogen, and testosterone) as well as chemical prostheses, it seems anachronistic to speak of practices of political representation without going through performative and biotechnological experiments on sexual subjectivity and gender. We must reclaim the right to participate in the *construction* of biopolitical fictions. We have the right to demand collective and “common” ownership of the biocodes of gender, sex, and race. We must wrest them from private hands, from technocrats and from the pharmacoporn complex. Such a process of resistance and redistribution could be called *technosomatic communism*.

As a mode of the production of “common” knowledge and political transformation, the auto-guinea pig principle would be critical in the construction of the practices and discourses of trans-feminism and the coming liberation movements of gender, sexual, racial, and somatic-political

16. See Mikhail Bulgakov, “Morphine,” in *A Country Doctor’s Notebook* (New York: Melville House, 2013), 134.

minorities. To echo Donna J. Haraway's expression, it will consist of a positioned, responsible corporal political practice, so that anyone wishing to be a political subject will begin by being the lab rat in her or his own laboratory.

## **NARCOANALYSIS: THE PSYCHOTROPIC ORIGINS OF CRITICISM IN FREUD AND BENJAMIN**

Freud was born at the heart of psychotropic Europe in 1856, just a year after Friedrich Gaedcke extracted an alkaloid he would call erythroxyline, a substance from which cocaine would then be isolated for the first time.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, there was traffic in Europe in dozens of psychoactive substances, through colonial networks, and these were marketed and consumed without any precise regulations; they included opium, laudanum, hashish, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and other well-known substances. Freud became aware of the existence of cocaine through an article in which the physician Theodore Aschenbrandt described the use of the first doses of pharmaceutical cocaine, produced by the German laboratory Merck as a treatment for fatigue in Bavarian soldiers. There can be no war without biochemical supplements to subjectivity that compel the body and consciousness beyond themselves, in the same way that there is no postwar situation without

17. I am indebted here to the work of Avital Ronell and to her use of "narcoanalysis" as a notion of literary criticism. Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 47–64.

biochemical supplements that induce amnesia.<sup>18</sup> Aschenbrandt's 1883 article made a strong impression on Freud, who referred in a letter to his fiancée, Martha, at the beginning of April that year to a future "project" involving the consumption of cocaine.<sup>19</sup> "Martha, I have a project," he wrote. Certainly, he thought he had found El Dorado, would become rich, and would discover hitherto unknown medical uses (raising blood pressure, combating fatigue, inducing sexual excitement, and effecting local anesthesia), but he was also hoping to produce another form of knowledge.

For the young Freud, cocaine is an epistemological project as much as an economic one. Less than a year later, he orders a package of 99 percent-pure cocaine hydrochloride<sup>20</sup> from Merck laboratories and on April 20, 1884, inhales his first line, a week before his twenty-eight birthday. In 1885, he writes in "Über Coca:" "One has the general impression that the mood created by cocaine in such doses has been caused not so much by direct excitation as by the absence of depressing elements in the general state of feeling. One might perhaps be permitted to assume that the euphoria that occurs in the state of health is nothing other than the normal mood of a well-nourished cerebral cortex that is 'unaware' of its bodily organs."<sup>21</sup> However, Freud's project does not get off to a good start. The first idea that comes to

18. On the use of pharmacoporn techniques for contemporary war see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 26–49.

19. Sigmund Freud, *On Cocaine*, ed. David Carter (London: Hesperus Press, 2011), 3–6. Letter to Martha, April 21 and June 19, 1884.

20. This is a very different substance than the street cocaine being sold today, which sometimes can contain only 5 percent pure cocaine hydrochloride. See David Cohen, *Freud on Coke* (London: Cutting Edge Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

21. Freud, *On Cocaine*, 23.

his mind is to treat his friend Ernst von Fleischl-Marxow's morphine addiction with cocaine. The result of the undertaking: Ernst becomes "our first European cocaine addict"<sup>22</sup> and suffers from sharp pains after being injected subcutaneously with a cocaine-based preparation. It should also be mentioned that Freud's intentions regarding Fleischl-Marxow were certainly not the clearest: he would oscillate between an amorous passion for his friend and jealousy. In reality, Ernst could have been a better suitor for Martha, Freud's fiancée, but he could also potentially have served to offer an anus for the pansexual pleasure of Freud. It's necessary, then, to open up to experimentation, but not too much.

Two years later, Freud is still not convinced that regular injections of cocaine also produce addiction. In his "Remarks on the Craving for and Fear of Cocaine," he defends the point of view claiming that the prolonged use of cocaine does not lead to addiction, except for those subjects who take it to replace a previous addiction to morphine (since Fleischl-Marxow's case has become too notorious to be swept under the rug). What it actually leads to, he thinks, is something he'll call "aversion."<sup>23</sup> Freud is right, but, as always, too optimistic: to take cocaine is to hate cocaine, to fear the letdown that follows ingesting it . . . but it is also to continue to take it. Mikhail Bulgakov, who becomes hooked on morphine and cocaine, writes, "I, the unfortunate doctor, who became addicted to morphine in February of this year, warn anyone who may suffer the same fate not

22. Ronell, *Crack Wars*, 53.

23. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: W. W. Norton, 1998), 62.



to attempt to replace morphine with cocaine. Cocaine is the most foul and insidious poison.”<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime, the pharmaceutical industry is reinforcing its status as the “jewel of the capitalist crown” in Europe and the United States.<sup>25</sup> It should be remembered that we were still in the antechamber of the pharmaceutical boom, which would increase full throttle thirty years later with the marketing of antibiotics and sulpha drugs. Dominated by a new technocapitalist imperative, the stirrings of the budding pharmaceutical industry would gradually demonstrate that there is no precise causal relationship between therapeutic certainty, liberty of production, and the consumption of bioactive substances.<sup>26</sup> During the last years of the nineteenth century, Merck laboratories produced hundreds of kilos of cocaine destined for medical or dietary uses. Between 1886 and 1901, cocaine was one of the ingredients for the first formula for Coca-Cola; and Pope Leon XIII was a regular consumer of it. While Merck was marketing cocaine for use as an anesthetic and MDMA (Ecstasy) to suppress appetite, Bayer was marketing heroin as a treatment for dependence on morphine.

Before turning to hypnosis or posthypnotic suggestion, Freud tries narcoanalysis. Avital Ronell writes, “The cocaine drama broke the ground for the study of hysterical neurosis.”<sup>27</sup> Freud would conceive of therapy by hypnosis using the model of substance addiction, paying attention

24. Bulgakov, *A Country Doctor's Notebook*, 142.

25. Pignarre, 13.

26. On the advent of bacteriology and the commercialization of antibiotics, see Bruno Latour, *Pasteur: guerre et paix de microbes* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).

27. Ronell, *Crack Wars*, 53.

to the *dependence* between the hypnotizer and the hypnotized in Charcot's practice. Morphine and the hypnotizer resemble each other in that both provoke an altered state of consciousness, a transformation of the mode under which the ego is present to the self, thereby permitting the emergence of other forms of perception, knowledge, and action. The psychoanalytic theory of transference itself seems to be derived from a model of the traffic and transport of a substance between the analyst and the analysand. For Freud, a reader of Krafft-Ebing's studies on psychopathology, masturbation, and the chemical production that it implies is the model for all addiction.<sup>28</sup> Alcohol, tobacco, morphine, and cocaine are masturbatory substitutes, exogenous practices of the production of surplus toxicity in the body. There's little difference between a substance being produced by injection and one produced by the body itself. There is no libido without toxicity. Sexuality, like the ingestion of psychotropic substances, is a search for the production of a state of neuronal intoxication.

Freud's penchant for the absorption of new technologies of the modification of subjectivity isn't limited to the trying and use of drugs. Not hesitating to transform his own body into a field of surgical experimentation, Freud brought his own testicles into play. Between 1923 and 1924, under the direction of his doctor, Hans Pichler, he undergoes two invasive operations, as well as more than thirty minor operations and a variety of more or less pain-

28. Freud to Fliess, in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, letter 79. See Peter Gay, *Freud*, 103.

ful fittings of oral prostheses to combat cancer of the jaw. Despite an unfavorable prognosis, Freud decides to undergo one additional operation: the “Steinach procedure,” that is, the tying of the seminal tubes, or a vasectomy, and thus becomes our first European male-to-male transsexual.<sup>29</sup> As we have seen, Eugen Steinach was the most celebrated researcher in the field of hormones at that time. He had already researched the masculinization of female rats by implanting testicles, and by blocking seminal fluids, without, however, having yet isolated the molecule of testosterone with certainty. Although his experiments were no more than summary, they led him to conclude that there is a relationship between hormonal production, sexual vigor, and aging. Steinach’s idea was more dependent on concepts of sexual hydraulics or the physics of vital fluids than it was on a molecular understanding of excitation: obstructing external sperm ducts would produce an increase in sexual power and a generalized rejuvenation. Freud underwent Steinach’s operation on November 17, 1923. As he would explain in a letter to his friend Ferenczi: “I’m hoping to improve my sexuality, my physical condition in general and my ability for work.”<sup>30</sup> After the surgery, Freud said that he felt better, but above all, he confessed to Otto Rank, the operation had aroused in him a desire for Dr. Pichler—Freud’s surgeon and the maker of his jaw prosthesis, which Freud called “the monster.”<sup>31</sup>

29. Later, Onassis, General de Gaulle, and even Pope Pius XII would also undergo Steinach’s procedure.

30. Freud to Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*, vol. 3, 1920–1933, eds. Ernst Falzeder and Eva Brabant, trans. Peter T. Hoffer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000). See Gay, *Freud*, 426.

31. Gay, *Freud*, 426.

A philosophy that doesn't use the body as an active platform of technovital transformation is spinning in neutral. Ideas aren't enough. "With 42,000 dead, art is not enough."<sup>32</sup> Only art working together with biopolitical praxis can move. All philosophy is intended to be a form of autovivisection—when it isn't a form of dissection of the other. It is an exercise in self-cutting, an incision into subjectivity. When enthusiasts of vivisection escape from their own body and head for the body of others, the body of the collective, the body of the earth, and the body of the universe, philosophy becomes political. This political extension of philosophical vivisection can take the form of a thanatology of the species (as in the proliferation of technologies of war) or of universal and utopic autoimmune therapy (religious, democratic, or scientific); moreover, thanatological management and utopic therapy often communicate with each other, one leading to the other by unexpected pathways (e.g., through the American democratic industrial-military complex).

Freud was a *cloaca maxima*, a sewer mouth who absorbed all the substances and techniques of the self produced in his time. Inhaling everything that passed by, he would not spare any exposed cell, neither his nor others'. Therefore, it would be erroneous to say that Freud's psychoanalysis had uniquely, and as a matter of priority, been a treatment technique based on words. The distinctive feature of the Freudian sewer mouth was the ingesting of all the somato-semiotic techniques, incorporating all prostheses

32. "With 42,000 dead, art is not enough," was a slogan of ACT UP New York, a direct action advocacy group working to address the AIDS crisis.

of his era and transforming them into living bodies and cultural discourses. Through his own practices of injecting psychotropic substances, through the poisoning of his friend Fleischl-Marxow, Freud learned that it was possible to modify psychic cartography only through a certain toxicity. Chemical substances that can be assimilated by an organism function like *potentia*: they provoke a substantial modification of the body and consciousness—provided that subjectivity allows itself to be affected, that it makes itself dynamic in the Greek sense of the word *dynamis*, which is to say, it allows its potentiality and its capacity to pass from one state into another to emerge. The transference that is understood to be the cornerstone of psychoanalytic therapy depends on a model of substance transport, a traffic in images, memories, and emotions that will modify a network of somatic links. Similarly, alcohol, tobacco, hash, cocaine, or morphine, as well as estrogens and androgens, are neither synthetic tunnels for escaping from reality nor mere links from point A to point B. Rather, they are technologies of the subject, microtechnologies of the mind, chemical prostheses from which will issue new practices for defining frames of human intelligibility. Modern subjectivity is the management of self-intoxication in a chemically harmful environment. Smoking in the plastic-electric-nuclear metropolis can be seen simply as one way of vaccinating yourself against environmental poisoning by means of homeopathic inoculation. The battle for modern subjectivity is a struggle for immunological equilibrium. The ingestion of drugs or psychoanalysis is the experimen-

tal ground on which we learn how to live in a somatic and semiotic environment that is becoming ever more toxic.

Self-analysis, as practiced by Freud, is above all a practice of somato-semiotic experimentation. The theory of the interpretation of dreams and the talking cure must be understood as methods of intoxication by images and language, while keeping in mind their chemico-material nature. It was only after having admitted that resorting directly to the ingestion of chemical substances will have unexpected side effects (dependence, the need to increase the dose, cellular degeneration) that Freud went back to the talking cure, the interpretation of dreams, or accounts of hallucinations as ways of producing a degree of neuronal toxicity—using memory, imagination, and free association to induce a psychic impact that is comparable to the ingestion of poisonous chemicals in small quantities. Psychoanalysis is semiotic homeopathy. The unconscious is a virtual terrain of extreme chemical hypersensitivity, and the mind is a fog through which run electric pathways and pernicious molecular combinations that can be reached only at the risk of modifying an interior psychotropic equilibrium. Knowing yourself by yourself means poisoning yourself by yourself, risking self-mutation.

Paris. Barcelona. Seville. Barcelona. Paris. Barcelona. Paris. New York. New Jersey. Paris. New York. Paris. Berlin. Paris. Montparnasse. Montparnasse. Montparnasse. It's your city today and always will be. Montparnasse. My life goes on, like the illusion of movement. Vauvert. Montpelier. Vauvert. Nice. Vauvert. Paris. Barcelona. Paris. Barce-

Iona. Paris. Barcelona. Paris. Madrid. Paris. Bourges. Paris. Bourges. Paris. London. Paris. Metropolitan addiction. London. Donostia. Burgos. Donostia. Paris. London. Paris. Bourges. Paris. Every city is a different narcotic terrain. Paris: V + T. Barcelona: C, cannabis, alcohol. New York: C + speed + Prozac. New Jersey: Ritalin + Prozac. Berlin: X. Hong-Kong: C, cannabis, cortisone. Madrid: C. Vauvert: *sex*.

Between 1927 and 1932, Walter Benjamin and several friends, including Ernst Block, Ernst Jöel, and Fritz Fränkel, engage in a series of chemical impregnations: they eat hashish, smoke opium (which they called *crock*), inject mescaline and morphine.<sup>33</sup> In every case, the substance must enter the body, penetrate the skin, the digestive tract, the blood, the cells. You must assail the mind by the synthetic route. A series of practices involving intentional infection. Benjamin, Block, and Fränkel wanted to find the key to universal therapy beyond the urge for individual intoxication. The political principle for such therapy is elementary: you cannot intend to hold forth about the real without first poisoning yourself with what you plan to administer to the other person next. This guinea pig principle stands today as a requirement for the possibility of any future micropolitical action.

In 1927 in Europe, the ingestion of hashish, opium, or mescaline was still a bizarre, marginal, and little announced experiment (as administering testosterone to cis-females is today). What's interesting about Benjamin's case isn't his consumption of hashish but his psychoaesthetic transcrip-

33. Max Milner, *L'Imaginaire des drogues: De Thomas de Quincey à Henri Michaux* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

tion of the experiment. As Henri Michaux would later do with mescaline,<sup>34</sup> Benjamin recorded his detailed impressions (in the strict sense of the term, they were mental inscriptions produced by the effects of these substances) in a series of letters and aphorisms that he described as the protocols of drug experiments carried out with the drugs.<sup>35</sup> Each of these protocols, which sometimes extended over time, was associated with a city (Marseille, Paris, Moscow, etc.), with a space that displays itself and is transformed under the effects of the substance. Modern metropolises are on drugs. The production, trafficking, and consumption of drugs mirror the circuits of colonial trade, the processes of sublimation, and the phantasmagorias characteristic of industrial pharmacopornographic cities.

Conceiving of this guinea pig principle in relation to the politics of gender and sex implies that it is impossible to advise you to try it or not, to fuck with a condom or not, to get surgery or not, that it is impossible to tell you which porn is supposed to excite you, whether lesbianism is a better sexuality than S&M, whether I should eat you out or the opposite, whether it's better to have it one way or another, whether it's better to take hormones or not. In the face of the conservatism and moral indoctrination that have dominated American feminist, gay, and lesbian politics and most nonprofit anti-AIDS organizations one must develop a micropolitics of gender, sex, and sexuality based on practices of intentional self-experimentation that are defined by their

34. Henri Michaux, *Miserable Miracle: On Mescaline*, trans. Louise Varese (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2002).

35. Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish*, ed. Howard Eilan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).



ability to resist and dismantle the somato-semiotic norm and to invent collectively new technologies of the production of subject.

## THE DRAG KING PLAN OF ACTION

The first time I take part in a drag king workshop is in 1998 at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center on West Thirteenth Street in New York. I sign up for the workshop with a mixture of voracious curiosity and confusion, characteristic of someone who comes from post-Franco Spain. I also participate in some lesbian sadomasochism workshops for fist-fucking, public sex, and coming out via writing; some workshops for pre-op and non-op transsexuals and NOHOs (those who take no hormones) and their partners; and some workshops to promote the visibility of sexual minorities. During the years when I inhabited the city of the living dead, I turned, in my struggle against an endemic loneliness, to a system for that training and construction of identity techniques developed by queer and trans micropolitics that, I am now convinced, not only helped me overcome the depression common to metropolises but also ended up as elements of a discipline of the mind, replacing the *exercices* of Saint Ignatius de Loyola from my Catholic childhood. This technique of the self is what would next allow me to resist being disappointed in politics, to resist succumbing completely to disenchantment and to your death.

My first drag king workshop is an initiatory exercise, the first step in an open process of mutation. There are a dozen of us cis-females, assigned the female gender at birth; each of us gives her name and explains where she comes from and what her experience with gender and sexual norms has been. The organizer is a butch woman with short hair who is wearing leather pants, with the face of a young boy and a soft voice. She listens attentively to our stories, but without awarding them too much psychological weight. Although we are in the LGBT Community Center, not all of us identify as being lesbian, butch, or bisexual. There are also some cis-females who go out with transsexual men and a hetero actress who has come for theatrical training on how to construct a male role. Going around the group twice produces enough talk to verify the fact that dealing with cultural and political codes of femininity and masculinity is not exclusively a lesbian or transsexual matter. The group members speak about their first time, rape, abortion, incest, the difficulties of having to feel different from other girls, the shame experienced at being pointed at in school for being a tomboy, or having too large a chest, or not having enough of one, or having one too early or too late, about not being able to sit the way they want or where they want, about not being able to spit or shout or hit back when others hit. I talk about never having felt like a woman, about thinking at the age of seven that I'd travel from Spain to Sweden like Christine Jorgensen with my first savings and get a penis grafted on, then about the operation on my chin when I was eighteen, about the feeling of not recognizing my body or

my face. Little by little, a denser and denser fabric of voices is created; it surrounds us and allows us to cover ourselves with shared words, creating a collective second skin. Under that protective membrane, through a political magnifying glass, we can see that femininity and masculinity are the gears of a larger system in which every single person participates structurally. Knowledge liberates. It produces a certain political joy that I have never experienced before.

This first part of the workshop could be defined as a collective induction into *gender suspicion*, in reference to the hermeneutics of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as described by Paul Ricoeur.<sup>36</sup> It encourages us to examine what we assume are stable foundations of our identity (sex, gender, and sexuality) and see them as the opaque effects of cultural and political constructions and, consequently, as potential objects for a process of intentional, critical, and insubordinate intervention. This shared gender suspicion provokes a subjective shift that Teresa de Lauretis and José Muñoz have called “disidentification.”<sup>37</sup> The drag king workshop doesn’t begin with dressing or making up our face to look like a man, but in becoming aware of the cultural orthopedics that construct everyday femininity, and by disidentifying from the normative nature of politically assigned gender.

Transformed by this knowledge, we put on men’s clothing and learn how to fashion a *packing* with condoms filled

36. Paul Ricoeur, *De l’Interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1965), and Paul Ricoeur and Olivier Mongin, *Le Conflit des interprétations: Essais d’herméneutique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1969), 149–50.

37. On disidentification, see José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

with cotton and how to bind our chest. By flattening the chest and making the pelvis bigger, you can modify the axis of the body and the balance of proportion between the shoulders, arms, and legs. Thus, the body's center of gravity—culturally located in cis-females at the level of the breasts (the sexualizing site par excellence and focal point of the hetero-male gaze)—is displaced to the pelvis. The legs are slightly spread, thus changing the distance between the feet and providing a more stable support for walking. Once verticality has been reinforced, freedom of movement of the trunk and extension of the arms is increased.

Following the instructions of our drag king orchestrator, I clip off a lock of hair and cut it into smaller pieces, then rearrange it on a sheet of creased white paper so that the hairs are aligned in the fold. I create my first beard. At first, I don't know exactly what kind of beard I want or which kind suits me, the one that goes the best with my face or with the type of drag king that I am. It will be the same thing with testosterone later on; the transfer of the hair pertains to illicit trafficking, to the smuggling of a political signifier. Subject fiction in a flash: these hairs applied to the face of a cis-female offer a glimpse of the possibility of another life. It's a certainty that wearing a beard provides an accelerated image of what the administration of testosterone produces in a cis-female's body after four to six months. Such artifice is therefore not merely a masquerade, a disguise, pure exteriority, but a revelation of a pharmacopornographic possibility already existing in my genes, and it has the ability to take on a cultural and political signification. On my face I outline the shape into which the beard will need to fit: a

Mexican-style mustache that descends from the corners of the mouth to the edge of the chin. I think of Pancho Villa, of Walter Benjamin. I think of you. Suddenly I see it in the mirror out of the corner of my eye: Bob. No mystery to that; it's just me, but it's also a man. I'm not inventing it; he's not a stage character; he is emerging out of what I am, the way I've always seen myself. The difference between now and before is that from now on it's visible to others. I'm not hiding any longer behind the name that was given to me, or the weighty supposition that I am or ought to be a woman.

The important thing is not to be dressed as a man—anyone at all can do that in his or her private space—but to have had the *collective experience* of the arbitrary and constructed dimensions of our gender. During the first drag king workshop, we're not trying to produce a theatrical effect or a caricatured stereotype of gender, but to construct a commonplace, all-purpose form of masculinity. Surprisingly, from this perspective, a minimal transformation produces an effect of maximum realism. Obviously, it's possible to think about the varieties of kitsch or camp in a drag king performance, in which the goal is to bring out the constructed dimensions of masculinity with hyperbolic style, as would be the case in drag king incarnations of Elvis Presley, the over-the-hill skirt chaser, the vulgar macho guy, or the cliché of a plumber in porn. In any case, the drag king destiny of each participant is an insoluble enigma until the moment when the transformation is produced. The process evolves in the course of performative exercises in the workshop and often extends into daily life. What struck me about that first experience was the power of the work-

shop as a collective plan of action for the reprogramming of gender, its potential to function as a political laboratory, its denseness in its capacity as public space. I immediately knew that I wanted to do it with others, reproduce this plan of action, and that a single time wasn't enough for me. There is a ritual dimension, a psychopolitical magic in the drag king workshop and its performative process of becoming, something that I cannot shirk, that intrigued me from the beginning, and that led me with the passage of time to become the drag king MC.

This is how I was given access to a culture of resistance against the normalization of gender organized around an array of drag king micropolitics that generated platforms to create and distribute knowledge. Drag king culture made its appearance in New York and San Francisco in the mid-1980s, in the workshops of Diane Torr, Annie Sprinkle, and Jack Armstrong;<sup>38</sup> the performances of Moby Dick, Dred, Split Britches, and the Five Lesbian Brothers; and the photographic work of Del LaGrace Volcano.<sup>39</sup> This culture hasn't found its niche in universities or archives; it has spread through a network of bars, clubs, and organizations that today reaches from San Francisco to Istanbul.

Drag king practices create a space of visibility peculiar to fag, dyke, and trans culture by recycling and by parodic declension and deconstruction of models of masculinity coming from dominant popular culture. Man and woman, masculine and feminine, and also homosexual and hetero-

38. Sprinkle, *Post-Porn Modernist*, 131.

39. See Del LaGrace Volcano and Judith "Jack" Halberstam, *The Drag King Book* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999).

sexual seem to be insufficient codes and identity locations for describing the contemporary production of the queer, trans, and crip body. Performative politics will become a field for experimentation, a place for the production of new subjectivities, and, as a result, a true alternative to traditional ways of doing politics that surpasses resignifying or resisting normalization.

2000. I spend six months at Princeton University and six months at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in France. Drag king practices are nearly nonexistent in France, Spain, and Italy; I decide to start organizing workshops. Obviously, this takes me to the heart of the drag king mafia: Diane Torr and Del LaGrace will become my first mentors. When I do a workshop with Diane Torr in France or in Spain, I'm the one who takes care of the commissions and acts as translator, the kid who picks up the cigarette butts and shines the shoes; and Danny King becomes the "master." I'm there to learn from the boss and, according to the ethic of "drag king *oblige*," to make him feel that he is the boss. In my workshops, obviously, I'm the boss. And this power is not to be shared; if you share it with another person or several others, you've lost your cachet as a *king*. This is one of the first lessons about masculinity—everything depends on the way power is managed: making another person believe that he has the power, even if, in reality, the person has it only because you've conceded it to him. Or else making the other believe that power, as something natural and nontransferable, is yours, and that

you and only you will be able to endow him with the status of masculinity, which he needs to belong to the dominant class. Foucault put it best when talking about sovereignty: power doesn't exist beyond the techniques involved in its theatricalization. Masculinity, an old biopolitical fiction constructed within the sovereign society before the eighteenth century, depends on an orchestration of power and body techniques, on a system in which power circulates through shared performative codes that are transmitted from body to body via semiotic signs and material rituals.

Diane Torr's technique of the deconstruction of femininity and apprenticeship in masculinity depends on a theatrical analytic method, on the breaking down of learned body gestures (a way of walking, speaking, sitting, getting up, looking, smoking, eating, smiling) into basic units (distance between the legs, opening of the eyes, movement of the eyebrows, speed of the arms, fullness of the smile, etc.) and examining them in their capacity as cultural signs for the construction of gender. In a second synthetic moment, different cultural codes are rearranged to construct a different gender fiction.<sup>40</sup> The goal of Diane's workshops is to experiment physically and theatrically with the ways in which masculinity is produced by an array of performative cultural codes learned and incorporated through what Judith Butler has called "regularized and constrained repetition of norms."<sup>41</sup>

40. See Diane Torr and Stephen Bottoms, *Sex, Drag, and Male Roles: Investigating Gender as Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).

41. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 95.



In order to construct my own workshops, I have learned from Diane's performative analysis of action, combined with a psychopolitical method that is closer to posttraumatic reeducation of the body and to the training of political minorities for survival, starting with *gender suspicion* and the elaboration of a collective narrative. There is no anatomical truth independent of the cultural and political practices of constrained repetition that lead us toward being men or women. From this perspective, which I would call postqueer—because it has experienced Butler's performative theories but also AIDS, Dolly the sheep, and the intentional consumption of hormones—desire, sexuality, and erotic and political pleasure reside precisely in *having access* to these performative biocodes. I suppose it's a matter of my generation and the fact that I've had it up to here with the dominant feminist politics and their restrictions: prohibitions about using dildos, prohibitions about watching pornography, prohibitions about fucking with everything, prohibitions about wanting money and power, prohibitions about succeeding, prohibitions about amusing yourself at the expense of those close to you, prohibitions about destroying the house of the master with the tools of the master. For me, being a drag king is inhabiting the potential that it is my prerogative not to deny, without apologizing, and fulfilling my sexual and political desire to be the master, to incorporate those performative codes, to attain this type of specialization of power, to experiment with the city, the body, sex, public speech the way a cis-male would. Without excuses. Without naturalization.

Once the initial construction of a drag king imperson-

ation is over, a performative practice guided by exercises of self-observation, recodification, and improvisation can begin. Becoming a drag king is a process that could be called a gender “chance operation,” using the well-known technique developed by Merce Cunningham: finding a way between norm and improvisation, between repetition and invention. When the participants have succeeded in constructing a masculine fiction that is sufficiently convincing and commonplace, they can confront the “naturalistic” gender ecology in the outside world. One of the most intense and transformative workshop techniques is experienced when you explore the city as a drag king. Walking around, getting a coffee, going down to the subway, hailing a taxi, sitting on a bench, smoking a cigarette leaning against a school wall . . . A new cartography of the city takes shape; for the first time you can enjoy the pleasure of the public space of the male flaneur, nonexistent for a body culturally encoded as female until that moment.

Once the drag king virus has been triggered in each participant, the hermeneutics of gender suspicion extend beyond the workshop and spread to the rest of daily life, causing modifications within social interactions. Drag king knowledge isn’t the awareness of being an imitator of masculinity surrounded by anonymous male and female bodies, businesspeople and mail carriers, mothers pushing baby carriages, young guys mainlining next to garbage cans; rather, it resides in the fact of perceiving others—all others, including oneself—for the first time, as more or less realistic biofictions of performative gender and sexual norms that are decodable as male or female. In strolling

around among these anonymous bodies, all these masculinities and femininities (including one's own) appear like caricatures that, thanks to a tacit convention, are seemingly unconscious of being so. There is no ontological difference between these embodiments of gender and mine. All of them are performative products to which different frames of cultural intelligibility confer various degrees of legitimacy. The difference is found in the degree of self-reflection, of consciousness, of compulsion, of the performative dimension of these roles. Becoming a drag king is seeing through the matrix of gender, noticing that men and women are performative and somatic fictions, convinced of their natural reality. This vision of the world makes you laugh, blows a current of buoyant air under your feet, makes you float—political ecstasy.

With time, from one workshop to another, my other drag king egos appear: Bruno (the name I gave myself when I was a kid to get into a boxing club with my father), Miguel, Alex. But it is Pedro Lemebel who gives me my drag king name, while I am organizing a workshop in Santiago, Chile, in 2004. Pedro Lemebel had organized a party at his house to welcome me. He received me wearing a long black dress and a strand of blue plastic beads around his neck; he was bare-chested on a winter day with a red turban on his head, à la Simone de Beauvoir. "I burned my head trying to rid it of boldness," he said to me. I had never seen anyone like him. He kissed me and told me, "*Ya llegó la niña revolucionaria.*"<sup>42</sup> I loved him from the first moment I saw him. "Lemebel

42. Translates to "Here comes the revolutionary kid."

doesn't need to write poetry to be the best living poet of my generation,"<sup>43</sup> said Roberto Bolaño. He is not only the best poet but also the most radical political queer performer of his generation—you have to be a brave poet to face Pinochet's police naked and riding a white horse.<sup>44</sup> Pedro called me Beto: his will be done. As if the phantom of Bolaño was speaking through him. These are my names: Roberto, Bob, Beto, Beatrizo, algebraic variations of a phonetic constellation. We organize the workshop at MUMS (Movimiento Chileno Unido de Minorías Sexuales) with the Queer MC, the first French drag king hip-hop group, who have come with us to Chile.

Chile has barely come out of its period of military dictatorship and has been undergoing the most radical neoliberal transformation, which was imposed by the Chicago School during the mid-1970s and 1980s and which has brought hyperinflation, free trade, the privatization of social services, and growing social inequalities. The country has gone from being a playground for Spanish colonialism and caciquism into becoming a lab for Milton Friedman's fundamentalist capitalism. The idea of a conference, a seminar, or a workshop in that context has a special intensity; but I am white and Spanish, have earned a PhD at Princeton University, and talk about dildos, testosterone, and trans and queer politics. During my first talk at the University of Chile, a group of Chilean feminists come to my conference to accuse me of being a "representative of the

43. Roberto Bolaño, *Entre paréntesis* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2004), 65.

44. I refer here to the performances of the group "Yegüas del Apocalipsis," formed by Pedro Lemebel and Francisco Casas between 1987 and 1995.

hetero-patriarchal and colonial order.” But the accusation slowly transforms into debate and the debate into dialogue. Finally, thirty-five women appear at the workshop on the winter day of August 27. They are militant mothers from the feminist Left of the Allende period, and with them are their grandmothers, daughters, and nieces, some sixteen-year-olds, some elderly lesbian couples, some working-poor women who will never leave the country and some girls from the bourgeoisie who will one day go to study in an American university. The Andean cold is freezing on our backs as we have our discussions; we dress and work on the unheated premises of MUMS, which is in a Santiago neighborhood behind which flow the polluted waters of the Mapocho. Thirty voices come forth, forging links to the point of creating a narrative of survival. The story that emerges from all these words isn’t about male domination or female submission but about resistance to domination, about refusal to surrender. Making each of them a drag king is a rite of investiture that the Queer MC and I carry out with more devotion and respect than ever. We prepare beards and mustaches, slick back hair, bind chests, and size up sports jackets. In most cases, there’s not much to do; these women *are* kings. They’ve never bowed their heads to anyone, they haven’t been afraid of torture or death, and they could face any little cock of the walk. There isn’t much to teach them, and I’m the one who learns from them, about living with pride and believing in gender revolution in a country where all revolutions have been violently crushed. That night, after eight hours of workshop, we go out in a group of forty

drag kings, as if we were in a postqueer remake of *Mad Max*, and walk through the streets of Santiago toward one of the rare gay bars in the capital. Pedro Lamebel is waiting for us there with his fag and trans pals. The Queer MC sing a Spanish version of one of their hip-hop pieces, "A New Gender Has Come." A small pack of drag kings and their friends invade the stage while the fags cruise the unattached drag kings. In the disco, we're breathing in so much coke that there is no need to snort it. Around four in the morning, the police arrive, we start keeping a low profile, and no one notices that there are cis-females in king drag in the room. The party lasts until the wee hours. I wake up in a bar with whores, fags, and trannies, and I'm in Pedro's arms.

In the face of the upsurge of corporate production and distribution of biocodes of heterosexual masculinity and femininity and gender violence, it is urgent to work to proliferate drag king workshops as spaces for the creation of urban brigades that, in their turn, will set off more workshops, decode the dominant gender grammar, invent new languages. Creating *global* counterhegemonic networks for reprogramming gender. No genuine drag king knowledge can be obtained from merely reading about a model for a workshop. Following the principle of the auto-guinea pig, it is necessary to take the risk of giving corporal and collective practices their chance. Such an experimental form of the production of knowledge and subjectivity renders obsolete the figure of the "professional" drag king guru going from place to place to initiate the process of the denaturalization of gender. The best organizer of a drag king work-

shop is the person who has participated in another drag king workshop and has decided to continue the experiment with a group of people within hir own local context.

After having experienced a variety of psychoanalytical or psychodynamic therapies, I have come to understand the drag king workshop as a new practice of political therapy, part of an array of techniques of criticism, reprogramming, and psychopolitical care that we might call *queeranalysis*. The Brazilian Guattarian psychoanalyst and art critic Suely Rolnik has taught us to consider modern clinical practices—those of psychiatry starting in the eighteenth century and psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth—as techniques that arose precisely for the management of “the collateral effects of this mode of historically dated subjectification that is characterized by the reduction of subjectivity to its psychological dimension and the prescription of its aesthetic dimension.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, we could say that the problem of contemporary clinical opinions has to do with the reduction of gender to individual psychology. Psychoanalytical or psychodynamic therapy often attempts to reduce the processes of the construction of political subjectivity to a psychological account. Psychology and psychoanalytical institutions use a colonial and Western epistemology, based on strongly racialized and heterocentric accounts of the Oedipal complex, castration, or penis envy as syndromes and pathologies, in order to diagnose and treat the frustrations generated by resistance or submission to the political imposition of gender, sex, and race

45. Suely Rolnik, “El arte cura?” *Quaderns Portàtils 2* (Barcelona: MACBA, 2006).

norms. Moreover, during the Cold War psychology became the discursive support of the pharmacopornographic industry, providing scientific legitimacy to the normative production and distribution of chemical prostheses. It is imperative to understand our sexual identities as the traumatic effects of a violent biopolitical system of sex, gender, sexuality, and race and to work out new myths that will allow us to interpret psychopolitical harm and give us the courage needed for collective transformation.<sup>46</sup> Critical accounts of the hormonal and surgical treatment of “intersexual” babies should be substituted today for the myth of the Oedipal complex, just as a drag king workshop, in its capacity as a corporal, collective, and political laboratory of production of genders (an ensemble of techniques that we could describe—in opposition to the clinic—as depsychologizing gender) would be a more effective place than the psychoanalyst’s couch to work on identity. Queeranalysis isn’t against psychoanalysis, but it goes beyond it by politicizing it, triggering an anticolonial and trans-feminist critical reading of its analytical narratives and therapeutic techniques. Queeranalysis develops the insights of Franz Fanon and Francois Tosquelles, of Jean Oury and Félix Guattari at La Borde. Queeranalysis is a practice that, instead of conceptualizing gender and sexual dissent through a lens of psychological pathology and identity dysphoria, would conceive of normalization and its effects as biopolitical

46. Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Butler, for example, in reinterpreting the discourses of psychoanalysis and legislation, has suggested the irreverent and suicidal Antigone—a child of incest who is more faithful to her brother than to the State—as a political figure that epitomizes the contradictions of heterosexual filiation.



apparatuses and forms of political violence. Queeranalysis does not reject all techniques of the production of subjectivity derived from Freudian psychology or from neurolinguistic programming—the analysis of dreams, the talking cure, hypnosis, and so on—but it attacks their model of “subject” as well as the rhetoric of gender, sex, race, disability, and class at work in these psychotherapeutic practices and their complicity in the pharmacopornographic regime. Finally, queeranalysis calls for a collective reappropriation of “common” biocodes (discursive, endocrinological, chemical, visual, etc.) for the production of subjectivity.<sup>47</sup>

## GENDER BIOTERRORISM

### The Techno-Lamb Model

In October 1958, a young woman of nineteen comes to the department of psychiatry at the University of California at Los Angeles. She’s seen by a team composed of Robert Stoller, Harold Garfinkel, and Alexander Rosen, a psychiatrist, sociologist, and psychologist, respectively, who are researching sexual identity. The medical register describes her as “a white female working as a secretary in an insurance company.”<sup>48</sup> The report adds, “Her appearance is convincing. She is tall, slender and shaped like a woman. . . . Her body displays male genital organs and a normally

47. Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). In this text, see the critical reinterpretation of psychoanalysis for further study.

48. Records of race (white) and class (worker) function as conditions of normality that authorize any other diagnosis whatsoever in terms of gender.

developed penis as well as secondary sexual characteristics of the female sex: breasts of average size, no facial or body hair.”<sup>49</sup> If she seems to satisfy the taxonomic expectations of the group of sex technocrats who are examining her, it’s perhaps because—as they put it—she presents no sign of “sexual deviance, transvestism or homosexuality. Nothing could differentiate her from a young woman of her age. She has a high voice, doesn’t wear clothes that are exhibitionistic or in bad taste like those characteristic of transvestites or men with sexual identity problems.” In the medical history, Garfinkel assigns her the fictional name Agnes, unaware that he is naming the seeds of a rebellion to come, a future *politics of sacrificial lambs* (from the Latin *agnus*) that will infiltrate the pharmacopornographic order.

After more than thirty hours of interviews, the entire medical team, armed with a detailed endocrinological and hormonal analysis, unhesitatingly establishes the same diagnosis. They affirm that they are dealing with a case of “genuine hermaphroditism”: Agnes is suffering from “testicular feminization syndrome,” a rare type of intersexuality in which the testicles produce elevated quantities of estrogen.<sup>50</sup> Following the protocol for the treatment of intersexuality, which provides for the reassignment of gender by means of hormonal and surgical techniques, she is

49. Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 123.

50. Robert Stoller, cited in Garfinkel, 120–22. See also the discussion of the case of Agnes in Hausman, *Changing Sex*; Norman Denzin, “Harold and Agnes: A Feminist Narrative Undoing,” *Sociological Theory* 8, no. 2 (1990): 196–216; Norman Denzin, “Back to Harold and Agnes” *Sociological Theory* 9, no. 2 (1991): 280–85; Mary F. Rogers, “They All Were Passing: Agnes, Garfinkel, and Company” *Gender and Society* 6, no. 2 (June 1992), 169–91; D.H. Zimmerman, “They Were All Doing Gender But They Weren’t All Passing: Comment on Rogers,” *Gender and Society* 6, no. 2 (1992): 192–98.

granted the right to therapeutic vaginoplasty, which is the surgical construction of a vagina using her own genital tissues in order to restore the coherence between her “hormonal identity” and her “physical identity.”<sup>51</sup> Agnes will be operated on in 1959, the erectile tissue of her penis and her testicles amputated; a vagina will be fabricated for her using the skin of her scrotum. Somewhat later, Agnes will have the right to legally change her name, and her female first name will appear on her identification papers.

From the viewpoint of traditional medical discourse, Agnes’s story seems to speak of the management of a problem of intersexuality to which medicine understood how to respond successfully. On the other hand, if we apply what Sedgwick might call “a paranoid hermeneutics”<sup>52</sup> to a reading of this story, we will be inclined to consider the hypothesis that the mechanisms of control of the body and sexuality characteristic of disciplinary medico-legal institutions of the pharmacopornographic regime have displayed all their effectiveness in acting on Agnes’s body. Let us compare Agnes’s clinical history with the tragic story of Herculine Barbin (the autobiography of a so-called hermaphrodite at the end of the nineteenth century who committed suicide when faced with the obligation to choose a single sex); we could conclude from this comparison that, in Agnes’s case, the apparatus of repression, having been transformed into a program of the public health system, was endowed with a new endocrinological and surgical sophistication to accom-

51. See John Money and Anke Ehrhardt, *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972).

52. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51.

plish in virtuoso style something that Herculine Barbin's epoch was only capable of dreaming about; and this was to establish a linear axiomatic relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality, turning the body into a legible and referential inscription about the truth of sex.<sup>53</sup>

The memoirs of Herculine Barbin (which were published in the late 1970s and became a best seller in France) will function as a foundational fiction for Foucault in order to construct his own history and theory of sexuality. If Herculine was pushed toward death (or rather, toward suicide), it was, for Foucault, because she/he was exactly located at the breaking point between two epistemes of sexuality. Herculine exists in a rift between two frameworks of the representation of sex, as if her/his body had fallen into the crack separating two divergent fictions of the self. Herculine isn't a man imprisoned in the body of a woman, or vice versa, but actually a body caught between conflicting discourses about sexuality. According to Foucault, whereas hermaphrodites before the end of the nineteenth century lived in a world without sexual identities where the ambiguity of organs allowed for a plurality of social identifications (which was the case for Marie Madeleine Lefort, who lived during the nineteenth century and whom we can conceive of as a woman with a beard and penis as much as a man with breasts), the new modern episteme of sexuality, forced Herculine Barbin to choose a single sexual identity and, as a consequence, to reestablish a coherence between

53. Herculine Barbin, *Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougal. With an introduction by Michel Foucault (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

the organs, the social expression of sex (male or female—the terms of gender don't exist yet), and sexual identity (heterosexual or perverted).<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, in this causal chain of the production of sex, Herculine Barbin becomes the source of a series of insurmountable discontinuities that will transform her/his body into a medical spectacle and her/his subjectivity into a moral monstrosity.

Remaining faithful to Foucault's model of analysis, it would seem logical to be inclined to extol Herculine Barbin's resistance to integration and to be critical about the ease with which Agnes seems to have been absorbed by means of 1950s biopolitical apparatuses.

Nevertheless, such a Foucault-inspired reading of the case of Agnes—in which subject formation is an effect of a normalizing apparatus—is complicated. Seven years after her operation and change of legal identity, Agnes produced a new account of her process of physical transformation in which she defied and ridiculed the contemporary medico-legal and scientific techniques of psychiatric and endocrinological diagnosis to which transsexuals have been forced to submit. This second account is a relatively humble but very effective example of the bioterrorism of gender, and it shows how a sacrificial techno-lamb can devour a pack of pharmacopornographic wolves. Agnes was no a victim of the medico-legal system, but rather a fine cartographer who managed to map out the new pharmacopornographic power relationships emerging during the Cold War.

54. For a discussion of the historical construction of the bodies of hermaphrodites, see Alice D. Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

A few years after her vaginoplasty, Agnes goes back to a doctor for a gynecological problem and introduces herself as a young boy of anatomically male sex who at the start of adolescence began secretly taking estrogen-based Stilbestrol, which had been prescribed to treat her mother following her hysterectomy. In this new version of the story, it all began as a game; when her elder sister began to take the pill, Agnes, who was still a child at the time, decided to do the same thing and took her mother's hormones. Agnes had always wanted to be a girl, and thanks to the estrogen, her breasts began to grow, while certain undesirable signs of puberty (such as facial fuzz) grew milder. The boy began by stealing one or two pills from his mother, now and then. Then it became whole boxes of them.

Agnes's second account presents some questions about Foucault's theory of power and subjectification, but also, by extension, puts into question certain readings of Judith Butler's analysis of performative identity to which her theory is often reduced. In the first place, Foucault describes a power regime in which a diffuse, tentacular array of disciplines of biopolitical normalization determines forms of subjectivity. However, in accordance with Maurizio Lazarato, I think it is useful to offset this notion of biopower with the Spinozan idea of *potentia*; in analyzing Agnes's account, we will see that, far from being docile, abnormal bodies today have become imbued with political power and, consequently, present possibilities for creating forms of dissident subjectification.

From a Butlerian perspective, Agnes's case can be understood as an example of performative resignification and

reappropriation. What Agnes learned is that gender identity, whether it's cis-gender, intersexual, or transsexual, is nothing other than *script*, narration, performative fiction, rhetoric in which the body acts simultaneously as scenario and as principle character.<sup>55</sup> Agnes strategically omits certain details in her account to the psychiatrists. For example, she avoids references to her relationships with women, which could suggest the possibility of a lesbian orientation after the sex change. On the other hand, her story emphasizes the tropes that belong to the script of an intersexual diagnosis: her desire to wear skirts, her sensitivity, her love of nature.

Agnes effectively uses a process of reappropriation of the performative techniques of the production of sexual identity, until then used to construct the gay, lesbian, intersex, transsexual, or transgender body as pathological. In this sense, we could categorize as *queer* performativity such trafficking in fictions by means of which certain terms for gender are severed from the authority of medical discourse (even at the very moment of its intervention) and used by a new subject of knowledge presently claiming for itself the status of "expert."

We can understand Agnes's case only through an analysis of the technological processes of inscription whereby her "imitation" of both femininity and intersexuality becomes able to pass for natural. This involves not only drawing attention to the constructed quality of gender but, more important, also claiming the potential to intervene in

55. See Judith Butler's analysis of a case of intersexuality in "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality," in *Undoing Gender*, 57–74.

this construction to the point of creating forms of somatic representation that are *alive*.

Agnes defies the logic of impersonation according to which a transsexual woman is a cis-male who is imitating femininity. She seems to have undermined the relationships of femininity to drag queen, of original to copy, of natural to artificial, of serious to irreverent, of content to form, of discretion to flamboyance, of structure to decoration. In such a case, Agnes is already no longer imitating, or claiming to make herself pass for, a woman by means of a performance that is to some extent stylized. By ingesting hormones and the production of a specific narration, Agnes is becoming an intersexed body “physiologically” in order to gain access to sex reassignment therapies without going through the psychiatric and legal protocols for transsexuality.

Through her intentional enlistment of intersexuality, Agnes is effectively critiquing not masculinity or femininity in themselves, but (by a tongue-in-cheek understanding of the complexity of the technologies of gender) the very pharmacopornographic apparatus of the production of the “truth of sex” itself. If the camp aesthetics emanating from the culture of transvestism and transsexuality has been defined by Susan Sontag<sup>56</sup> as a critique of the original through the process of producing a copy or counterfeit version, then we can say that, in a certain way, Agnes is pushing the very notion of camp to its limits, to the point of rendering it obsolete. In camp practices, aesthetics supplants

56. Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, rev. ed. (New York: Picador, 2001), 275–92.



ethics and theater supplants life. In Agnes's case, somatic technology supplants aesthetics, and life supplants theater.

Agnes is practicing biodrag: it is her body that achieves the process of imitation and thus puts an end to the traditional metaphysical oppositions that seem to produce so many problems in performative theory (facade vs. interior, performance vs. anatomy, mind vs. body, psychological gender vs. chromosomes, social identity vs. genetics). Agnes is a biocultural artifact composed of organic substances, a fiction whose very contours are somatic.

If we accept the fact that Agnes is a living pharmacopornographic biopolitical fiction, we must also say that her mother (hooked on the seemingly slightly chaotic ingestion of a hormonal technology of substitution) and her sister (who has been taking the birth control pill since adolescence) are as well. In taking their innocuous pills, both of them are allowing themselves to live biotechnological fictions of identity. The difference is that Agnes seems to reappropriate the techniques of subjectification and *genderization* of her body, whereas her sister and mother unconsciously ingest each of these technologies as if they were supplements to their "natural" femininity.

Agnes's body is neither the passive material acted on by a series of biopolitical mechanisms of normalization nor the performative effect of an array of discourses on identity. Her body, truly a sexual colossus of self-design, is the result of the reappropriation, use, and collective arrangement of certain technologies of gender with the goal of producing new forms of subjectification.

Agnes allows imagining a cheap, auto-experimental form of do-it-yourself bioterrorism of gender that we—in reference to the politics of free software management<sup>57</sup>—could call *copyleft gender politics*, a cellular micropolitics that looks beyond the politics of representation for leakage points in the state’s control of fluxes (hormones, sperm, blood, organs, etc.), codes and institutions (images, names, protocols, legal inscriptions, architecture, social services, etc.), and the privatization and marketing of these technologies of production and modification of gender and sex by pharmacopornographic corporations. The axiom of the lamb: the principle of the auto-guinea pig. The objective of the lamb: to struggle against the privatization of the body and the reduction of the *potentia gaudendi* to a workforce, a brand, a copyright, and a sealed biocode. The mode of functioning of the lamb: the pirating of hormones, texts, body techniques, knowledge practices, codes, pleasures, fluxes, chemical substances, cartographies . . . The transformation of the body of the multitude into an open living political archive: the common *somathèque*.<sup>58</sup>

### Traps of Pharmacopornographic Neoliberalism

Contemporary biodrag activism is confronted, fifty years after Agnes, with a new set of violent neoliberal economic and politic strategies, including the privatization of the

57. See the texts of Lawrence Lessig, the founder of the creative commons movement; Lessig, “Code and the Commons,” (keynote address, given at a conference on *Media Convergence*, Fordham Law School, New York, NY, February 9, 1999).

58. My notion of *somathèque* in French refers to somatic technologies and to the body as techno-living cultural archive, as in the word *bibliothèque*, which means library.

health system, government deregulation, deep cuts in social spending, and the militarization of social life. In the present context, it's possible to imagine (at least) two tracks of development for the pharmacopornographic economy in the face of which different modes of activism could be articulated.

The first is the preservation of theological-humanist political states that regulate the action of the neoliberal (meaning free trade, either democratic or totalitarian in the context of globalization) pharmacopornographic economy. Current pharmacopornographic corporations would function as free market tentacles inside contemporary nation-states (which would continue to see themselves as sovereign and patriarchal) and would negotiate with them to determine the directives for the production, use, and consumption of chemical prostheses and semiotic gender and sex codes.

The second transformation is one into an abstract deterritorialized nation-state of the pharmacopornographic industry. We could also be witnessing a process of privatization of contemporary nation-states, which would be progressively absorbed by the pharmacopornographic industry. This would be the strategy employed by the pharmacopornographic companies to escape pre-1970s regulations imposed by states (to avoid the gradual transformation of pharmaceutical patents into generics, the more or less severe regulation of the production and distribution of pornographic audiovisual material, and attempts to abolish prostitution), as these companies engage in the political direction of new national entities (via the FDA; the

International Monetary Fund; the European Union; and the governments of the United States, China, or India) and purchase state institutions (for example, the Department of Health or Department of Justice or the prison-industrial complex) and put them to work to their benefit, refilling such archaic institutions with new content whose only objective would be increasing consumption and pharmacopornographic profits.

In fact, the pharmacopornographic industries are already in competition with the domestic affairs of the old nation-states . . . The war to come isn't a war between states (Israel vs. Palestine or the United States vs. the oil-producing countries) but more probably a war of pharmacopornographic multinationals against the multitude of vulnerable bodies, a war of the pharmaceutical multinationals that hold the copyright for active principles against the traditional gatherers of plants and their specific forms of knowledge, a war of the military-prison-industrial complexes against the racialized and pauperized populations, a war of mafia states against the users of "illegal" drugs, a war of the multinational conglomerates that coordinate the management of medical and legal institutions and free market consumption against bodies deprived of nationality, a war of the systems of control that construct docile sexual subjects to achieve the total and limitless exploitation of their *potentia gaudendi*.

The history of the transformations of production, distribution, and consumption of heroin offers several leads about the probable evolution of the legal and political management of sex hormones. Although their common origins

don't seem obvious, heroin and aspirin were synthesized in the same year, 1897, and in the same laboratory, by Hoffman and Eichengrun, by means of the same process. It involved the simple acetylation of morphine (in the case of heroin) and salicylic acid (in the case of aspirin). Heroin and aspirin were legally marketed by Bayer the following year for the treatment of various pulmonary affections, because of their analgesic properties. Although restrictions on the production and distribution of heroin went into force in the 1920s, it was still possible to find heroin-based pills in an English pharmacological catalog in 1949.<sup>59</sup> After fifty years of the repression and criminalization of the marketing of heroin, which resulted in the deterioration of fields, which weren't being tilled, the adulteration of the substance, and the corruption of its trafficking networks, medical specialists today are developing a gradual reintegration of heroin into the legal pharmaceutical market. For example, Macfarlan Smith Limited in Edinburgh is making yearly advances in the experimental and therapeutic use of this substance.<sup>60</sup>

The changes in the legal status of a substance and the description of a consumer as criminal or mentally ill (addicted in the case of heroin, and gender dysphoric in the case of sex hormones) facilitate the establishment of a political relationship between illegal drugs and biocodes of the production of gender. Sex hormones, whose consumption is strongly regulated by the state, are drugs whose use is, if not illegal, at least politically controlled; and their use, considering their potential for transforming gender and

59. Carnwath and Smith, *Heroin Century*, 31.

60. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

sex, is subject to specific restrictions that espouse administrative criteria and channels of distribution comparable to those of narcotic substances.

How to react in the face of states' resistance to legalizing the sale of pharmaceutical heroin or removing the consumption of sex hormones from psychiatric protocols? If we consider the close relationships maintained by the neoliberal nation-states, the pharmaceutical corporations, and the networks of drug trafficking, it appears urgent that those dismissed as junkies (the users of illegal drugs) and those diagnosed with gender dysphoria (the potential users of sex hormones) must organize into associations of copyleft drug consumers and force the state-industry-pharmaceutical-drug-trafficking networks to facilitate free access without restrictions to these biocodes of the production of subjectivity. Just as the users of Agreel prosecuted Sanofi-Aventis laboratories for the serious side effects<sup>61</sup> of this medication (originally intended to disguise the symptoms of menopause by blocking the action of the dopamine neurotransmitters), the users of heroin could prosecute the state in instances of withdrawal or overdose for that state's having prevented the production, distribution, and consumption of that substance for users in a trustworthy and legal manner. This political pressure would lead gradually to the production and distribution of heroin (or cocaine, MDA, etc.) as generics that could be first bought freely on the pharmaceutical market and, in the long run, be produced and managed collectively as *chemical prostheses*

61. Some side effects include Parkinsonian syndromes, symptoms of anxiety, and depression.

*commons*. This would ultimately entail a process of a multitude-in-the-making, not only of a lobby of consumers of gender and sex biocodes but also a network of trans-junkie experts, a monster-multitude-in-the-making.

### **Gender and Sex Hackers**

The cis-males and cis-females (indiscriminately heterosexual or homosexual), as well as transsexuals, who have access to surgical, endocrinological, or legal techniques of the production of identity, are not simple economic classes in the Marxist sense of the term, but genuine “pharmacopornographic factories”—existing simultaneously as raw materials, producers (but rarely proprietors) of biocodes of gender, and pharmacopornographic consumers.

Porn actors; whores; the transgender; genderqueers; and producers, traffickers, and consumers of illegal drugs inhabit different cultures, but all are used as living pharmacoporn laboratories. All of them sell, buy, or get access to their biocodes as pharmacopornographic property. The sudden emergence of new gender statuses is creating a novel type of conflict between owners and managers of the patents of the microtechnologies of subjectification (sex hormones, psychotropic molecules, audiovisual codes, etc.) and the producers and traffickers of these techno-biocodes. The pharmacopornographic entrepreneurs, who are among the contemporary leaders of global capitalism, are trying to restrict and privatize the biocodes of gender and convert them into rare and naturalized objects by means of legal and market techniques.

Computer hackers use the web and copyleft programs as

tools of free and horizontal distribution of information and claim that they should be in reach of everyone. The pharmacopornographic *gendercopyleft* movement has a technoliving platform that is a lot easier to gain access to than the Internet: the body, the *somathèque*. Not the naked body, or the body as unchanging nature, but the technoliving body as a biopolitical archive and cultural prosthesis. Your memory, your desire, your sensibility, your skin, your cock, your dildo, your blood, your sperm, your vulva, your ova . . . are the tools of a potential gendercopyleft revolution.

The various producers of sexual biocodes are very different from one another. Some get off on economic and social privileges, such as the models through whose bodies the dominant codes of male and female beauty are produced. Others, such as porn actors or sex workers, suffer from the lack of regulations for the open market of their biocodes. But all of them depend on the pharmacopornographic industry and its local alliances with the police forces of the nation-states. One day, they will all become hackers.

Agnes, mother of all the techno-lambs: Del LaGrace Volcano, Kate Bornstein, Jacob Hale, Dean Spade, Mauro Cabral, Susan Stryker, Sandy Stone, King Erik, Moises Martínez—all are master hackers of gender, genuine traffickers of semiotico-technological flux, producers and *tinkers* of copyleft biocodes.

Gender copyleft strategies must be minor but decisive: the survival of life on the planet is at stake. For this movement, there will be no single name that can be transformed into a brand. It will be our responsibility to shift the code to open the political practice to multiple possibilities. We could



call this movement, which has already begun, Postporn, Free Fuckware, BodyPunk, OpenGender, FuckYourFather, PenetratedState, TotalDrugs, PornTerror, AnalInflation, UnitedUniversalTechnoPriapism . . .

This book, a legacy of Agnes's self-experimentation politics, is a protocol for self-tests carried out with testosterone in gel form, exercises of controlled poisoning on my own body. I am infecting myself with a chemical signifier culturally branded as masculine. Vaccinating yourself with testosterone can be a technique of resistance for bodies that have been assigned the status of cis-females. To acquire a certain political immunity of gender, to get roaring drunk on masculinity, to know that it is possible to look like the hegemonic gender.

Little by little, the administration of testosterone has ceased to be a simple political test and has molted into a discipline, an asceticism, a way of restoring my spirit by means of the down growing on my arms, an addiction, a form of gratification, an escape, a prison, a paradise.

Hormones are chemical prostheses. Political drugs. In this case, the substance not only modifies the filter through which we decode and recodify the world; it also radically modifies the body and, as a result, the mode under which we are decoded by others. Six months of testosterone, and any cis-female at all, not a should-have-been-boy or a lesbian, but any girl, any neighborhood kid, a Jennifer Lopez or a Rihanna, can become a member of the male species who cannot be told apart from any other member of the hegemonic class.

I refuse the medico-political dose, its regime, its regularity, its direction. I demand a virtuosity of gender; to each one, its dose; for each context, its exact requirement. Here, there is no norm, merely a diversity of viable monstrosities. I take testosterone like Walter Benjamin took hashish, Freud cocaine, or Michaux mescaline. And that is not an autobiographical excuse but a radicalization (in the chemical sense of the term) of my theoretical writing. My gender does not belong to my family or to the state or to the pharmaceutical industry. My gender does not belong to feminism or to the lesbian community or to queer theory. Gender must be torn from the macrodiscourse and diluted with a good dose of micropolitical hedonist psychedelics.

I don't recognize myself. Not when I'm on T, or when I'm not on T. I'm neither more nor less myself. Contrary to the Lacanian theory of the mirror state, according to which the child's subjectivity is formed when it recognizes itself for the first time in its specular image, political subjectivity emerges precisely when the subject does not recognize itself in its representation. It is fundamental not to recognize oneself. Derecognition, disidentification is a condition for the emergence of the political as the possibility of transforming reality. The question posed by Deleuze and Guattari in 1972 in *Anti-Oedipus* remains stuck in our throat: "Why do the masses desire fascism?" It's not a question here of opposing a politics of representation to a politics of experimentation, but of becoming aware of the fact that the techniques of political representation always entail programs of the somatic production of subjectivity. I'm not

opting for any direct action against representation, but for a micropolitics of disidentification, a kind of experimentation that doesn't have faith in representation as an exteriority that will bring truth or happiness.

In order to accomplish the work of therapy for the multitudes that I have begun with these doses of testosterone and with writing, I now need only to convince you, all of you, that you are like me, and not the opposite. I am not going to claim that I'm like you, your equal, or ask you to allow me to participate in your laws or to admit me as a part of your social normality. My ambition is to convince you that you are like me. Tempted by the same chemical abuse. You have it in you: you think that you're cis-females, but you take the Pill; or you think you're cis-males, but you take Viagra; you're normal, and you take Prozac or Paxil in the hope that something will free you from your problems of decreased vitality, and you've shot cortisone and cocaine, taken alcohol and Ritalin and codeine . . . You, you as well, you are the monster that testosterone is awakening in me.