TESTO JUNKIE
BEATRIZ PRECIADO
SEX, DRUGS, AND BIOPOLITICS IN THE PHARMACOPORNOGRAPHIC ERA
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY BRUCE BENDERSON
This book is not a memoir. This book is a testosterone-based, voluntary intoxication protocol, which concerns the body and affects of BP. A body-essay. Fiction, actually. If things must be pushed to the extreme, this is a somatopolitical fiction, a theory of the self, or self-theory. During the time period covered by this essay, two external transformations follow on each other in the context of the experimental body, the impact of which couldn’t be calculated beforehand and cannot be taken into account as a function of the study; but it created the limits around which writing was incorporated. First of all, there is the death of GD, the human distillation of a vanishing epoch, an icon, and the ultimate French representative of a form of written sexual insurrection; almost simultaneously, there is the tropism of BP’s body in the direction of VD’s body, an opportunity for perfection—and for ruin. This is a record of physiological and political micromutations provoked in BP’s body by testosterone, as well as the theoretical and physical changes incited in that body by loss, desire, elation, failure, or renouncement. I’m not interested in my emotions insofar much as their being mine, belonging only, uniquely, to me. I’m not interested in their individual aspects, only in how they are traversed by what isn’t mine. In what emanates
from our planet’s history, the evolution of living species, the flux of economics, remnants of technological innovations, preparation for wars, the trafficking of organic slaves and commodities, the creation of hierarchies, institutions of punishment and repression, networks of communication and surveillance, the random overlapping of market research groups, techniques and blocs of opinion, the biochemical transformation of feeling, the production and distribution of pornographic images. Some will read this text as a manual for a kind of gender bioterrorism on a molecular scale. Others will see in it a single point in a cartography of extinction. In this text, the reader won’t come to any definitive conclusion about the truth of my sex, or predictions about the world to come. I present these pages as an account of theoretical junctions, molecules, affects, in order to leave a trace of a political experiment that lasted 236 days and nights and that continues today under other forms. If the reader sees this text as an uninterrupted series of philosophical reflections, accounts of hormone administration, and detailed records of sexual practices without the solutions provided by continuity, it is simply because this is the mode on which subjectivity is constructed and deconstructed.
it is philosophically relevant today to undertake a somato-political\(^1\) analysis of “world-economy.”\(^2\)

From an economic perspective, the transition toward a third form of capitalism, after the slave-dependent and industrial systems, is generally situated somewhere in the 1970s; but the establishment of a new type of “government of the living”\(^3\) had already emerged from the urban, physical, psychological, and ecological ruins of World War II—or, in the case of Spain, from the Civil War.

How did sex and sexuality become the main objects of political and economic activity?

Follow me: The changes in capitalism that we are witnessing are characterized not only by the transformation of “gender,” “sex,” “sexuality,” “sexual identity,” and “pleasure” into objects of the political management of living (just as Foucault had suspected in his biopolitical description of new systems of social control), but also by the fact that this management itself is carried out through the new dynamics of advanced technocapitalism, global media, and biotechnologies. During the Cold War, the United States put more money into scientific research about sex and sexuality than any other country in history. The application of surveillance and biotechnologies for governing civil society

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the material conditions of a large-scale ecological transformation that resulted in destruction of other (mostly lower) energy resources, rapid consumption, and high pollution. The *Trash Vortex*, a floating mass the size of Texas in the North Pacific made of plastic garbage, was to become the largest water architecture of the twenty-first century.²²

We are being confronted with a new kind of hot, psychotropic, punk capitalism. Such recent transformations are imposing an ensemble of new microprosthetic mechanisms of control of subjectivity by means of biomolecular and multimedia technical protocols. Our world economy is dependent on the production and circulation of hundreds of tons of synthetic steroids and technically transformed organs, fluids, cells (techno-blood, techno-sperm, technovum, etc.), on the global diffusion of a flood of pornographic images, on the elaboration and distribution of new varieties of legal and illegal synthetic psychotropic drugs (e.g., bromazepam, Special K, Viagra, speed, crystal, Prozac, ecstasy, poppers, heroin), on the flood of signs and circuits of the digital transmission of information, on the extension of a form of diffuse urban architecture to the entire planet in which megacities of misery are knotted into high concentrations of sex-capital.²³

These are just some snapshots of a postindustrial, global, and mediatic regime that, from here on, I will call *pharmacopornographic*. The term refers to the processes of a biomolecular (pharmac) and semiotic-technical (porno-

depression or Prozac, Viagra or an erection, testosterone or masculinity, the Pill or maternity, tritherapy or AIDS. This performative feedback is one of the mechanisms of the pharmacopornographic regime.

Contemporary society is inhabited by toxic-pornographic subjectivities: subjectivities defined by the substance (or substances) that supply their metabolism, by the cybernetic prostheses and various types of pharmacopornographic desires that feed the subject’s actions and through which they turn into agents. So we will speak of Prozac subjects, cannabis subjects, cocaine subjects, alcohol subjects, Ritalin subjects, cortisone subjects, silicone subjects, heterovaginal subjects, double-penetration subjects, Viagra subjects, $ subjects . . .

There is nothing to discover in nature; there is no hidden secret. We live in a punk hypermodernity: it is no longer about discovering the hidden truth in nature; it is about the necessity to specify the cultural, political, and technological processes through which the body as artifact acquires natural status. The oncomouse,25 the laboratory mouse biotechnologically designed to carry a carcinogenic gene, eats Heidegger. Buffy kills the vampire of Simone de Beauvoir. The dildo, a synthetic extension of sex to produce pleasure and identity, eats Rocco Siffredi’s cock. There is nothing to discover in sex or in sexual identity; there is no inside. The truth about sex is not a disclosure; it is sexdesign. Pharmacopornographic biocapitalism does not produce things.

It produces mobile ideas, living organs, symbols, desires, chemical reactions, and conditions of the soul. In biotechnology and in pornocommunication there is no object to be produced. The pharmacopornographic business is the invention of a subject and then its global reproduction.

**MASTURBATORY COOPERATION**

The theoreticians of post-Fordism (Virno, Hardt, Negri, Corsani, Marazzi, Moulier-Boutang, etc.) have made it clear that the productive process of contemporary capitalism takes its raw material from knowledge, information, communication, and social relationships. According to the most recent economic theory, the mainspring of production is no longer situated in companies but is “in society as a whole, the quality of the population, cooperation, conventions, training, forms of organization that hybridize the market, the firm and society.” Negri and Hardt refer to “biopolitic production,” using Foucault’s cult notion, or to “cognitive capitalism” to enumerate today’s complex forms of capitalist production that mask the “production of symbols, language, information,” as well as the “production of


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

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

In her 1967 *SCUM Manifesto*, Valerie Solanas had seen things with a certain precision. More than forty years have gone by, and one element seems to have changed: all the grotesque characteristics that Solanas attributes to men in capitalist society at mid-twentieth century seem to have spread to women today. Men and women are the bioproducts of a bifurcated sexual system with a paradoxical tendency for reproduction and self-destruction. “To be male is to be deficient, emotionally limited . . . egocentric, trapped inside himself, incapable of empathizing or identifying with others, of love, friendship, affection, of tenderness.” Men and women are isolated units, creatures condemned to constant self-surveillance and self-control by a rigid class-sex-gender-race system. The time they devote to this brutal political arrangement of their subjectivity is comparable to the whole extent of their lives. Once all their vitality has been put to work to reduce their own somatic multiplicity, they become physically weakened beings, incapable of finding any satisfaction in life and dead politically before they have taken their last breath. I do not want the female gender that has been assigned to me at birth. Neither do I want the male gender that transsexual medicine can furnish and that the state will award me if I behave in the right way. I don’t want any of it.

BECOMING MOLECULAR

When I take a dose of testosterone in gel form or inject it, what I’m actually giving myself is a chain of political signifiers that have been materialized in order to acquire the form of a molecule that can be absorbed by my body. I’m taking not only the hormone, the molecule, but also the concept of hormone, a series of signs, texts, and discourses, the process through which the hormone came to be synthesized, the technical sequences that produce it in the laboratory. I inject a crystalline, oil-soluble steroid carbon chain of molecules, and with it a bit of the history of modernity. I administer myself a series of economic transactions, a collection of pharmaceutical decisions, clinical tests, focus groups, and business management techniques; I connect to a baroque network of exchange and to economic and political flow-chains for the patenting of the living. I am linked by T to electricity, to genetic research projects, to megaurbanization, to the destruction of forests of the biosphere, to the pharmaceutical exploitation of living species, to Dolly the cloned sheep, to the advance of the Ebola virus, to HIV mutation, to antipersonnel mines and the broadband transmission of information. In this way I become one of the somatic connectives through which power, desire, release, submission, capital, rubbish, and rebellion circulate.

As a body—and this is the only important thing about being a subject-body, a technoliving system—I’m the platform that makes possible the materialization of political imagination. I am my own guinea pig for an experiment on the effects of intentionally increasing the level of tes-