

Introducing *Testo Junkie*

Ann Pellegrini, Ph.D.

New York University

ABSTRACT

This article introduces the portfolio of essays on Paul B. Preciado's *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2013). After briefly describing the project of that book, the essay explains the history of the public forum and, now, publication in which Preciado was in conversation with 3 clinicians: Kirsten Lentz, Carolyn Stack, and Jamieson Webster.

This section of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* orbits around Paul B. Preciado's genre-bending intellectual blast of a book *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. Since its first appearance in Spanish and French, in 2008, and its eagerly awaited English translation, in 2013, *Testo Junkie* has quickly established itself as a new classic of feminist and queer thought about the making and unmaking of gender and the body. One of the many accomplishments of this book is the trouble it causes to writing, thinking, or even "having" gender or a body.

Indeed, in the wake of *Testo Junkie*, the words *feminist*, *queer*, *the body*, and *thought* itself cannot surface the same. *Testo Junkie* remaps the surface of the body by showing us how "new dynamics of advanced techno-capitalism, global media, and biotechnologies" are transforming the conditions and experiences of sex, subjectivity, and embodiment (Preciado, 2013, p. 25). As against the disciplinary regimes correlative to 19th-century capitalism that turned the body outside in to produce experiences of psychic depth and subjective interiority, Preciado traces the emergence of a new kind of bodily experience and psychic exteriority forged through a whole "series of new technologies of the body (which include biotechnology, surgery, endocrinology, and so forth) and representation (photography, cinema, television, cybernetics, videogames, and so forth) that infiltrate and penetrate daily life like never before" (Preciado, 2013, p. 77). Preciado names this new era "pharmacopornographic capitalism."

As befits the project's ambition to reveal the somatopolitical fictions of gender during a time of "hot, psychotropic, punk capitalism" (Preciado, 2013, p. 33), *Testo Junkie* itself both defies easy categorization and gets the reader a little hot and bothered under the cover of the book and maybe under the covers. Preciado performatively blends pornographic narrative, autobiographic experimentation, high-octane theory, and a dazzling historical analysis of being sexed and feeling sexy in the age of bio-pharmo-industrial politics. *Testo Junkie* is a rush to read and be rolled by.

In April 2015, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (SGS) and New York University's Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality (CSGS) jointly rolled out the red carpet for a public forum on *Testo Junkie* and the challenges and prompts that text offers to psychoanalysis. Preciado was joined in conversation by three clinicians: Kirsten Lentz, Carolyn Stack, and Jamieson Webster. Their commentaries on *Testo Junkie*, and Preciado's response to them, are published here for the first time.

This forum was the sixth such public one co-organized by SGS and CSGS and curated by Muriel Dimen (on behalf of SGS) and myself (on behalf of CSGS). It continues to be a joyous collaboration. The forum's ambition, like those of the five that preceded it, is to spark conversation and movement

between the couch and the cubicle, between the space of analysis and those institutional sites in the academy that draw on psychoanalytic theory to think about sex, gender, power, embodiment. There are too few structured opportunities to talk to each other across these spaces. One of the ongoing goals for these forums, then, in both their live and published forms is to provide occasion for dialogue (and dialogue can and should include disagreement). We also hope to show gender and sexuality studies and psychoanalysis how much they—*we*—yet have to learn from each other as we move to develop shared vocabulary and conceptual tools for mapping the multiple terrains of embodiment and for moving ideas beyond the architectures, literal and figurative, that currently contain them and us.

Notes on contributor

Ann Pellegrini, Ph.D., is Professor of Performance Studies and Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, where she also directs the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. Her books include *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (Routledge, 1997); *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance*, co-authored with Janet R. Jakobsen (New York University Press, 2003); and “You Can Tell Just By Looking” and 20 Other Myths About LGBT Life and People, co-authored with Michael Bronski and Michael Amico (Beacon Press, 2013). She co-edits the “Sexual Cultures” series at New York University Press.

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Testo Junkie Notes for a Psychoanalytic Forum

Paul B. Preciado, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

Starting with an autobiographical account of my own involvement within psychoanalytic practices, this paper opposes psychoanalysis to a new set of “*somatopolitical*” techniques of intervention. The paper studies psychoanalysis as a technology of the body, a verification apparatus, and a technology of government and asks how psychoanalysis can (or can’t) work as a critical technique of production of subjectivity within the neoliberal pharmacopornographic regime.

When you are invited to a conference and you accept you never know what will be the actual situation when the conference takes place. I realize now that in my mind, in order to be able to accept a proposition about a future conference, I always imagine conferences taking place outside time and space, in a discursive utopia, in a sort of Habermasian setup with the right illumination and highly communicative speakers. But conferences are part of life; they take place within the noise of life. They are noise. I never thought I would have to speak after not sleeping for a week, after days of madness. After days during which things made no sense. I never thought that this forum around *Testo Junkie* (Preciado, 2013) would take place just a few days after the exhibition *The Beast and the Sovereign*, which I was curating at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, was censored because the sculpture *Not Dressed for Conquering* by artist Ines Doujak was considered “inappropriate”; after having been accused of “injuries” against the King of Spain because the sculpture played with a caricature of the sovereign; and finally after having been fired from the position of Director of Public Programs and of the Independent Studies Program of the museum.

If as Carolyn Stack affirms when it comes to sex, to my sex, to the sex of those of my kind, to the sex of the cripple and the transfeminist, I have no shame, I was surprised to see that the act of institutional censorship made me ashamed like nothing before. It knocked me down, it silenced me. I am ashamed of having been censored and fired. I am ashamed of having been rejected by the institutions of power. I think about The Goethe University rejecting *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* as Walter Benjamin’s qualification for the *habilitation* teaching credential.¹ I think about Jacques Derrida feeling like a rural *pied-noir* in the upper class French white environment of the rue d’Ulm. I think about them with admiration. I think about myself with shame. In order to be able to turn shame into poetry I could only follow Mahmoud Darwish’s (1997, p. 29) guidance and choose to be a Trojan poet, a poet of losers.

Knowing that you are clinicians but also that you are implicated in different ways with processes of mourning and grief, of pain and sorrow, I ask you to take care of me, to help me go through this instead of displaying your knowledge to diagnose my trans subjectivity or to criticize my theory. Now that I feel undone because of censorship, I have returned to my Brazilian Guattarian psychoanalysts. But now that I am transitioning, I am coming back to psychoanalysis with a sense of political urgency. Not so much in relation to my pain or my shame but mostly in relation to the gender and sex framework of intelligibility that psychoanalysis still works with.

CONTACT Paul B. Preciado, Ph.D. ✉ paulbpreciado@yahoo.fr 📍 Metsovou 25, Athens, GR-10682, Greece.

¹See Eliand (2014).

Because Jamieson Webster has spoken personally about her own psychoanalytic process, I offer the same as a due response. I have been 15 years in psychoanalysis. There were moments of high intensity and moments of pause, moments in which psychoanalysis was a need and moments in which it was a counterdiscipline. There were also long periods of silence. Being voracious of techniques of the self, I have tried everything: Kleinians in Spain, Lacanians in France, Feminist Freudians in the United States, Guattarians from Brazil ... I have tried the face-to-face chair, the back-side coach, and lately the window-coach of Skype sessions. I even thought about being a therapist myself, but queer and trans politics, art, and theory proved closer to my modes of action—today I understand that the anticolonial techniques of intervention of Amerindian shamanism will be better suited for the project of unbecoming that I am waiting for than the bourgeois *dispositif* of psychoanalysis. Along these different psychoanalytic practices, I have seen how difficult it was for psychoanalysts to work with a transgender and contra-sexual process of subjectification because most of their clinical categories are defined in gendered terms and rely on the notion of sexual difference. I could say that nevertheless all the practitioners that I have worked with have betrayed the normative gender framework of psychoanalytic theory but always within the “secret” of the sessions, outside of public critique. This is how, during these years, a queer-analysis has emerged out of these conversations, tensions, and disputes within my own psychoanalysis.

My first book, *Contra-Sexual Manifesto* (Preciado, 2000), a political genealogy of dildos and sexual prosthesis that questioned the psychoanalytic notions of “fetish” and “*jouissance*,” but also *Testo Junkie* could be read as critical reactions to the normative boundaries imposed by psychoanalytic discourses on the understanding of gendered and sexual subjectivities. But, is it possible to enter within a psychoanalytic relationship standing on a position of epistemic disobedience? Kirsten Lentz understands this defiance noting that *Testo Junkie* puts forward “a subject without a psyche” (this issue, p. 7). I would rather say that I try to elaborate a different notion of the psyche, one that is not reduced to the fiction of interiority and individual affect that corresponded to the arrangement of the 19th and early 20th century biopolitical colonial and disciplinary regime. I am rather thinking about an “externalized” psyche, mediated by bio and media technologies, by pharmacology, pornography, prosthetics. ... It is the notion of “subject” itself, tackled by the political fictions of identity and autonomy, that is being displaced by a series of process of subjectification. What I am trying to grasp in *Testo Junkie*, and I am still working on, is the radical transformation of political techniques to control and produce the psyche that is taking place after the Second World War with the development of new biochemical and media technologies but also with the growth of neoliberal governmental techniques. In *Testo Junkie*, I explore some of the signs of this political and epistemic displacement: (1) the invention of the notion of gender as a clinical tool used within the management of intersexuality, (2) the invention of the notion of transsexuality and the possibility of technically constructing sexual difference (through the use of hormones, surgery, but also psychological management, legal techniques, etc.), (3) the technical separation between heterosexuality and reproduction achieved with the invention and pharmaceutical merchandising of the contraceptive pill, and (4) the transformation of pornography into a multimedia masturbatory prosthesis that produces capital. Methodologically, I was exploring how the relationships between different techniques of the body, technologies of government, and apparatuses of verification (regimes of truth making) shifted in a period of strong geopolitical and postcolonial transformation right after the Second War World. The aim of the book was to draw a genealogy of these power techniques but also to sketch a possible cartography of modes of resisting and fighting.

While doing this genealogy of power technologies and trying to exceed the psyche as interiority and the metaphysical separation between body and mind, matter and spirit, I have come to work with the notion of “*somathèque*.” The mind is not an invisible inside. The body is not a visible outside. Whereas Freud suggested that the psychic apparatus did not coincide with consciousness but that a rather larger domain existed that he called the unconscious and designed psychoanalysis as a technique to reach it, it is my contention that what I call the “*somathèque*,” or the *somatopolitical apparatus* (thought as a living archive of political fictions) is larger than the body and the psyche and that new clinical techniques are needed (including queer-psychoanalysis, performance, art, media,

and political techniques) to reach it and transform it. We could call this coming field of intervention somatopolitical analyses.

Whereas Kirsten Lentz opposes the all-knowing position of the narrator of *Testo Junkie* to the nonknowing position of the analyst in psychoanalytic practice, my experience as both student of psychoanalysis and as patient is that clinicians tend to know more and better about sex and gender even when they pretend they don't, whereas the *Testo Junkie* narrator (who is not me), from her/his empowered theoretical yet parodic position knows less, displaying her/his nonknowing as grand narrative. I understand critical theory both as a "direct action," in the sense of a political collective form of intervention, and as a fictional performative subjective narrative. The book voluntarily embraces the position of the left intellectual narrator (positions taken normally by rather nonfeminist and nonqueer thinkers such as Žižek, Badiou, or Negri)² and uses the form of the grand narrative to tell the history of the *somathèque* from the point of view of the political minorities, to narrate this story as a Trojan poet.

I understand psychoanalysis as a three-level practice. On one hand, it is a *technique of the body*, a particular arrangement of bodies within space, a somatopolitical intervention operated through the voice, within language, that presupposes that we can intervene within the political strata of the *somathèque* without touching the body. In this respect, it is a social ritual where two bodies sign a contract in order to produce truth without touch. Attention must be paid to the architectural dimension of the practice, the domestic setting, the privatized encounter, the enclosure of the act of cure within four walls. On a second level, psychoanalysis also works as what Foucault (2010, p. 32) called "an apparatus of verification," a social semiotic machine aimed to produce truth about the subject using a particular truth regime where notions of femininity, masculinity, health and sickness, normality and deviation are still validated. Finally, it is also a *technology of government*, a technique to manage subjects within a given political context, to make them functional and productive within a certain economy of life and death.

A contemporary psychoanalysis that would aim to transform itself would have to be ready to ask what is the *somathèque* that pharmacopornographic capitalism produces? What is the desire that is constructed, triggered, and stimulated by this hot psychotropic regime? What is the political fiction of individual psyche that psychoanalysis contributes to construct? What kind of technology of government is psychoanalysis within the neoliberal society? Can it still work as disciplinary biopolitical technique designed to normalize subjects? How does this technology of the early 20th century work within the mechanisms of the pharmacopornographic regime? How does psychoanalysis work after the invention of the pill, the extension of pornography as a multimedia global prosthesis, after the use of chemical substances and biotechnology to intervene within the processes of subjectification? What can transfeminist queer-color crip politics do for psychoanalytical practice? In other words, how might psychoanalysis play within this new landscape or control and resistance techniques?

I want to use this public tribunal to ask the psychoanalyst and clinicians to develop a queer transfeminist political statement that would start by questioning the use of universal sex and gender female/male categories within clinical practices. I don't want you, my friends, to remain caught up within the disciplinary biopolitical task of normalization. I don't want you to become part of the pharmacopornographic complex and the frustration-satisfaction business either. But it is not possible to establish a dialogue between transfeminist theories and practices and psychoanalysis if psychoanalysis does not renounce publicly the sex-gender categories it has been working with since the beginning of the 20th century. We need a much more politicized and experimental psychoanalysis, open to the questions of pedagogy, performance, art, economic and institutional emancipation, able to denounce the sex and gender assignment and normalizing techniques that are practiced within the medical, legal, pharmacological, and media systems as forms of gender violence and oppression. Rather than seeing itself as a clinical tool to manage gender dysphoria or even sexual trauma or shame, psychoanalysis should leave the couch, leave the office and come with us to the streets. Because our claim is not health, not happiness, not *jouissance*, not normalization, not identity, but revolution.

²See, for example, Žižek (2009), Badiou (2015), and Negri (2005).

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Notes on contributor

Paul B. Preciado, Ph.D., is a philosopher, curator, and transgender activist. His first book, *Manifeste Contra-sexuel* (Balland, 2000) was acclaimed by French critics as “the red book of queer theory” and became a key reference for European queer and trans activism. He is the author of *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics* (Feminist Press, 2013) and *Pornotopia* (Zone Books, 2014), for which he was awarded the Sade Price in France. He is currently Curator of Public Programs of Documenta 14 (Kassel/Athens).

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Emergent Subjectivity: The Parallel Temporalities of Psychoanalysis and Social Theory

Kirsten Lentz, Ph.D., LCSW

New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis

ABSTRACT

Kirsten Lentz uses Preciado's *Testo Junkie* (2013) as an occasion to explore the rivalry between psychoanalysis and social theory in their attempts to account for human subjectivity. Although a commonsense view holds that the 2 fields have completely different relationships to temporality—psychoanalysts fix their gaze to the past, whereas social theorists imagine radical futures—the distinction is more complex than it appears. The analyst does not lead the patient toward the past but holds and guards the place of futurity so that new experiences of subjectivity eventually become available. Like “theory,” then, psychoanalysis tries to make room for “emergent subjectivity,” for ways of being in the world that have not yet been imagined or formulated, that have not yet been born in the mind of culture. Lentz thus insists that the radical critique of gender can and should be understood as fundamental to the work of psychoanalysis.

The first human story in the Bible is a story of precocity. Knowledge arrives with the first bite of the mythological apple, splitting good and evil, inaugurating the mortal world. Such cataclysmic knowledge always arrives before its time. The story goes that tasting of the apple brought the primal couple the terrible knowledge that ultimately cast them from paradise, but there must have been some niggling curiosity that stirred before the biting, some Promethean seed of desire for knowing that sprouted, grew in strength, and ultimately ripened into the action of reaching for the fruit. This inkling of an idea was its own knowledge, a preknowing before the consummation, the registration of something else, however vague, beyond the current state of things. — Francisco González (2013, p. 114)

Beyond gender

What would it mean to try and coax from our selves a new version? What would it mean to accept the idea that the old version had been shaped, not only by our mothers and fathers, caregivers and teachers, siblings and friends, but more fundamentally and more enigmatically by language, history, cultural constructs, and power structures that are mostly outside our control and often beyond conscious comprehension? And then what would it mean to know—without quite being able to know—that there was still something else? Something better to be or to experience? Some more or less vague sense of transformation toward which one could aspire? I am describing what it would mean to live beyond the confines of gender. And, at once, I am describing, most basically, the work of clinical psychoanalysis. But in order to defend the claim this comparison makes, I must venture down a rabbit hole.

The account of gendered and sexual experience narrated so powerfully in *Testo Junkie* (Preciado, 2013) provides just such a place to explore these questions and to test these intersections. Preciado's book offers a breathtaking account of the violence of binary gender; a rich, lucid description of the complex scientific, economic, discursive edifice built up around its invention and control; and a compelling narrative of a life lived both inside and against it. Preciado continues Foucault's (1978, 1985, 1986) project in his three-volume work, *The History of Sexuality*, but radically updates it by

adding to it the multiple complex histories of gender and transgender. Here, one of the primary means by which biologically defined, binary gender is understood to be produced and maintained is through an excitation of sexual energy related to what Foucault called the “perverse implantation” of sexuality. Preciado describes a marshaling of *potentia gaudendi*, or orgasmic force, harnessed by the twin industries of pharmacology and pornography, that enables the production and reproduction of dominant gender and its technologies.

Testo Junkie is a bold and powerful polemic. First and foremost, it is a polemic against gender—not against its utility but against its very existence. Preciado writes, “There is no empirical truth to male or female gender beyond an assemblage of normative cultural fictions” (p. 263). In order to enable the project of traversing and undoing this fictional assemblage, the book moves back and forth between social theory and a hot, pornographic idiom. In the space between the two, Preciado enacts a deconstruction of gender through the testosterone experiment he undertakes on his own body. This performative element is the central site of the work’s genius. Like the industries and technologies Preciado describes, the book similarly deploys the pornographic and autobiographic to excite its reader and, at once, to promote its antinormative political project. Thus fueled by lust and aggression, we burst through the barriers of unknowing, as the glass edges of the fishbowl that has constrained us become suddenly visible and starkly obvious in the very moment of their shattering. Afterward, it is no longer possible to understand gender as having any biological grounding. We are in a new biopolitical episteme that requires an entirely new theoretical apparatus for understanding the subject. And it is this apparatus that *Testo Junkie* provides.

But, more significantly, *Testo Junkie* calls an emergent subjectivity into being: it interpellates a subject who not only exceeds the categories of maleness and femaleness but who exceeds the category of transgender as well. This is the place I’d like to dwell: what is the labor of the “emergence” of marginal subjectivity? What is its temporality? Its epistemology? And what of the territorial feud that seems to erupt between psychoanalysis and social theory over its location? It is no exaggeration to say that, after this text, feminism and queer politics can never be the same.

A subject without a psyche

I was asked to respond to this work, not from the perspective of a social theorist, but as a clinical psychoanalyst. But there is something somewhat perverse about this assignment. Although it is many other things as well, *Testo Junkie* is, in part, a book grounded in a critique of psychoanalysis: “The problem of contemporary clinical opinions,” Preciado writes, “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” (p. 378). The point is well taken. Throughout its history, psychoanalysis has maintained and naturalized, rather than questioned and challenged, binary social categories, particularly “woman” and “man.” As Preciado demonstrates, it was the field of psychology itself that introduced the concept of “gender”—via John Money—so that gender conformity, however malleable, could be managed and controlled. Gender was thus invented precisely to provide a means by which to manipulate the subject. This makes gender a mechanism of disciplinary power, in Foucault’s terms, and complicit with what Preciado calls the “pharmacopornographic” production of subjectivity. In order to operate as a lever for the operations of biopower, of course, gender difference must be apprehended as born rather than made. Psychoanalysis has helped perpetrate this form of control by maintaining just such an apoliticized, naturalized concept of gender. I think it is without question that the discourse of the psychological has served this kind of disciplinary function.

But beyond this historical critique of psychoanalysis, I argue, the book radically challenges a psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity by offering up a subject who seems to be unaccountable in psychoanalytic terms. The form of subjectivity modeled by the “testo junkie” is one that refuses the interiority of mourning; one that refuses intersubjectivity as a mode of becoming (the testo junkie is presented as a lone figure); and one that claims unlimited access to knowledge, allowing little space

for uncertainty, ignorance, or ineffability. At the most fundamental level, *Testo Junkie* undoes the very object on which the psychoanalyst presumes to operate: it refuses the “psychic” as a category of analysis. Its protagonist, so to speak, is a subject without a psyche. The narrator sets the stage for this elision in the introduction:

I’m not interested in my emotions inasmuch 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 [p. 11].

The emergent subject here is neither a biological nor a psychical entity. Rather, it is a social-historical effect. With this sweeping move, Preciado brackets the very concept of psychic life. And, as goes the psyche, so goes any notion of unconscious process along with it. In this way—and surely by design—the book offers little space for a psychoanalytic perspective to stand.

Let me point, then, to the fault line beneath my feet.

Striving to remain dumb

I want to begin by addressing the problem of knowledge. To call *Testo Junkie* a polemic, as I did a moment ago, is to define it in rhetorical terms. But what I am really trying to get at is something about the epistemological position from which it issues. The narrator of *Testo Junkie* speaks from a standpoint of all-knowing. In a sense, this is only to say that it speaks in the voice of “theory”; but Preciado, in an apparently self-conscious stylistic maneuver, embraces the omniscience of the social-theoretical voice with uncommon extravagance. This is one of the sources of the book’s seductive power. It is also what enables its transformative reach. Casting its panoramic view across the social landscape, and rendering that landscape transparent to its all-seeing gaze, *Testo Junkie* looks for a new desiring subject who will emerge from the cultural surround.

And it is here that I draw the first contrast to the voice of the psychoanalyst—not as theorist but as practitioner. If the social theorist speaks in an omniscient narrative voice, the analyst must strive to remain dumb. In the hands of the best clinicians, analysis embraces unknowingness. In the consulting room, we hover in a stance of suspended unknowing for long periods of time, fostering confusion, contradiction, paradox, hoping for potential new formulations that may eventually emerge in the space between analyst and patient but whose emergence the analyst is not supposed to force or impose. In fact, both analyst and patient alike must guard against the premature presumption of knowledge. If a patient believes that there is nothing about himself that is unknown, then the analytic space collapses before it can open, and nothing mutative can occur. Just as important, if the analyst assumes the mantle of Lacan’s “subject supposed to know,” imposing premature interpretation into the analytic space, then she, too, collapses the space and the process of change is foreclosed in advance.¹ Such an analyst fails her patient.

To think about the problem of knowledge from another psychoanalytic vantage point, knowing too much can be traumatic. It can even lead to psychosis. I’m thinking here of Avgi Saketopoulou’s (2014) description of a trans child who experiences her biomale body as so incommensurable with her felt sense of being a girl that she teeters on the edge of psychosis. She experiences what Saketopoulou identifies as “massive gender trauma,” which ensues when the world doesn’t reflect back to the subject his or her own self-perception and when the subject is too mired in the

¹For Lacan, the analysand attributes knowledge to the analyst, who in this way becomes the “subject supposed to know.” This supposition must occur for transference to take place. For Lacan, then, this knowledge is not embodied by the analyst; it is fantasied, a projection of the analysand. As Lacan envisions things, the analyst is aware that there is a discontinuity between her knowledge and the knowledge attributed to her. See especially Lacan’s *The Seminar: Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964* (1977, pp. 232–253).

“knowing” that her own body ostensibly proffers. Saketopoulou gently and meticulously narrates the process by which the child becomes able to acknowledge and mourn the embodiment and the gendered interpellations into which she was born and which she must leave behind. It is this very process of mourning that ushers the child away from psychosis and into greater mental freedom. Saketopoulou is clearly drawing here on Judith Butler’s (1995) theorization of gender melancholy and the forms of intersubjective relation and incorporation that this crucial affect brings with it.

The unmourned cock

Such an account of the crucial role of mourning stands in stark contrast to Preciado’s “testo junkie,” who declares, “I don’t want mental stability; I just want the cock of the century” (p. 410). The “testo junkie” stalwartly refuses any sense of gender melancholy or of melancholy in general. The narrator’s lover in the book, V, who transforms in the course of the narrative from “straight” to “lesbian,” does experience excruciating loss. So depressed, she plans her death date at 40. This is exemplified most clearly in a scene in which our narrator goes with V to the site of an ancient pagan temple:

The crypt at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer contains Sarah ... an Egyptian goddess; Sarah, the patron saint of the gypsies. V and I go to see her. We’re carrying two empty urns. ... In her urn, V carries the child that she didn’t have with P. In the form of a relic, I carry the cock that I didn’t need to cut off in order to be who I am, the same one that I will have no need to graft onto me to be who I am [p. 263].

Here is a beautiful political moment, a refusal to be hailed by dominant culture as either lacking or excessive. There is an insistence on desire that is not born from lack. At the same time, there is a confrontative refusal to mourn gender embodiment. Gender melancholy would seem to be a form of interiority that is incommensurable with the subjectivity Preciado seeks to describe and incite. The erasure of melancholy thus goes hand in hand with what I am calling the elision of the psychic.

This is, of course, paradoxical, as the entire book is written in memoriam—in the wake of and in response to the tragic death of a loved one. The death of William is the event that calls forth the narrative itself, and it is in William’s name that the narrator conducts the self-experimental course of testosterone. In that sense, it may seem as if the book narrates an incorporation of a lost object—to invoke Freud’s definition of melancholia. Recall that rather famous passage from “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917):

The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object [p. 249].

The lost object casts its shadow upon every page of *Testo Junkie*, which can thus be read, not only as an experiment in the administration of testosterone to the body of a person assigned “female” at birth, but also as an experiment in the incorporation of and identification with William, the object lost and loved. The book plays self-consciously with becoming-William, who is named only once and most often referred to simply in the second person, “you.” In one such moment, the narrator displays his or her body for a video camera, the subject of a pornographic testimonial, with dildos arranged in two orifices.² Positioned this way, s/he speaks to the dead:

You’re the only one who could read this book. In front of this camera, “for the first time I’m tempted to make a self-portrait for you.” Design an image of myself as if I were you. Do you in drag. Cross-dress into you. Bring you back to life with this image [p. 19].

This playful desire to conquer death through incorporation is all the more powerful for the way the book’s mode of address itself brings the reader too into this death-relation. Interpellated by a second-person

²Because the narrator in the book does not adopt either male or female pronouns, I have followed suit here.

narration as the “you” of the text, we readers, too, are transformed into dead objects; we, too, will be absorbed into the melancholic speaking subject. One could argue, although there is no space to do so here, that the deadness of the reader makes an argument of its own, an argument about the impossibility of intersubjectivity.

So perhaps we can say that there is a split that the book inaugurates—or perhaps this is one split among others. There is the adamant refusal of loss, of melancholy, perhaps even of mourning. In the language of the book, William’s death is not “mourned”; it is “avenged” (p. 16). On the other hand, this refusal defines the very process of melancholia itself. Judith Butler (1995), rereading Freud’s (1917) “Mourning and Melancholia” through the lens of the many losses incurred under conditions of gender and sexual normativity, emphasizes that the effort of melancholy is to preserve the object by denying its loss. The mechanism of this denial is a careful intrapsychic act of mummification within the ego. For Butler, the disavowal of loss is part of the very architecture of gender identification itself. As she writes, “It seems clear that the positions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ which Freud understood as the effects of laborious and uncertain accomplishment, are established in part through prohibitions that demand the loss of certain sexual attachments and demand as well that those losses not be avowed and not be grieved” (p. 168). Returning to the Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer from the vantage point of Butler’s argument, the empty urn that contains the unmourned cock appears in a new light. As with the establishment of heteronormative expressions of gender, the unmourned cock is similarly a disavowal of loss, one that secures gender—albeit a new expression of it. With this disavowal come certain foreclosures of possibility that work against the openings that this book, as a whole, seeks to create. Which is to say, this is a moment where *Testo Junkie* is at odds with itself—where Preciado’s insistent refusal of psychoanalysis limits its transformative reach.

Changing tenses

But I’ve strayed a bit far afield of the point I was trying to make about knowledge, unknowing, and the competition between these different discursive registers. So let me suggest that perhaps these struggles over the status of mourning signal something, namely, what we could think of as the distinct *temporalities* of social theory and clinical psychoanalysis. We tend to conceive the distinction between the two through a spatial metaphor: breadth versus depth. Particularly after Foucault, social theorists are wary of a hermeneutics of depth and adopt instead a broad-ranging analysis of surfaces. What I am suggesting here is that instead we think this distinction in temporal terms. In short, they speak in different tenses. For social theory, and perhaps for queer theory especially, I argue (as others have before me), that the subject is primarily a futuristic one, reaching beyond cultural intelligibility and making space for the new, the emergent, for forms of being and experience that were previously thwarted, unseen, unrecognized. As José Muñoz (2009) puts it, “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (p. 1).³ Preciado’s “testo junkie” is just such a liminal subject, who exposes and recognizes, in an experience-near way, life lived both within but especially beyond the gender binary and biodeterminism. This forward reach gives this work its revolutionary, manifesto-like quality. The book reads at times like science fiction come to life.

In this way, social theory is radically precocious; it represents emergent subjectivities that have not yet been imagined or formulated, that have not yet been born in the mind of culture. In another context, speaking of gay male experience in the 1970s, Francisco González (2013) gets at this precocity of being: “What happens when there is no naming. ... when there is a lack in cultural reverie?” (p. 117). What happens, he asks, when the subject is born prematurely, before anyone can register its existence? He concludes that “cataclysmic knowledge always arrives before its time”

³There has been a proliferation of work in the area of queer theory on the subject of temporality in recent years. In addition to Muñoz’s (2009) work, see the work of Elizabeth Freeman (2010), Judith Halberstam (2005), Lee Edelman (2004), and Carolyn Dinshaw (2012), to name but a few.

(p. 114). The precocious subject knows too much or *is* too much for its social surround. Making a contrast to the Laplanchean concept of the maternal enigmatic, González argues that this subject embodies “an enigma occasioned by an onomastic gap in the social surround. This gap is a breach in the figuration and naming of things, and the registration of this gap is a slow coming to consciousness of an opacity in the social mirror, or its failure to reflect some vital element of the self” (p. 115).

But in turning to González, I find myself already changing tenses as social theory gives way to the phenomenological and the psychoanalytic. We go, first, from a future tense to a past perfect tense, from a “what will be” to a “what might have been.” In this past perfect, a future can exist, will exist, only in relation to its past. Initially, the future is but a banished hope in a present saturated by loss. In the consulting room, the future always feels the pull of the past. We wrestle ghosts. Trauma exerts limits upon the subject that must be overcome in the course of treatment in order for psychoanalytic futures, and queer futures to be formulated and lived. All of which is to say that the struggle with the residual takes place in the service of an imagined future. At first, patients may find those futures sedimented and unreachable. Many patients come to treatment with a sense of the future version of themselves and the lives they’d like to enjoy. But it is precisely through the encounter with the losses entailed by the past that this future vista opens. Until that tipping point is reached, patient and analyst must sit with what might have been and what is—sometimes for years and years—before they can finally address what could be, what will be. The past perfect thus calls forth a future perfect, a “what will have been.” Clinical psychoanalysis struggles with the residual even as it attempts to imagine futures. The analyst’s function, then, is not to lead the patient toward the past so much as it is to hold and guard the place of futurity while the patient gropes to gain enough release from the past so that new experiences of subjectivity can become available.⁴

Fucking intelligibility

It’s interesting to think about the split mode of address of *Testo Junkie* in the context of the questions of temporality I am posing here. Most obviously, this is a work that volleys with speed back and forth between the register of social theory and the intimate register of sexual experience. So here is another “voice”—the pornographic—that mediates and infuses social theory. The rhythm of the pornographic takes us. Takes us back and forth and in and out of social theory. To adopt the sexual idiom of *Testo Junkie*, we are—social theory is—*penetrated* by a giant, desiring, prosthetic cock. This may prompt us to ask, “What does social analysis have to gain by being so roundly fucked?”

The proximity of these discursive registers in Preciado’s account implies that a political manifesto must, by necessity, make use of lustful sexual experience, of *potentia guadendi*, to blow open the terrain of cultural intelligibility and to make room for new forms of humanity. (And it stands to reason that we would need an especially large cock to do this.) Lust makes room for new ways of understanding gender experience, and perhaps for gender’s transcendence. Martin Frommer (2006) has written that with lust we engage in a “psychic transit” between familiar states of consciousness or self-states and states that are less acceptable to us and less integrated into who we feel we are. Unlike other self-states that feel familiar and integrated, in lust, we discover an otherness within ourselves. He writes,

Like romance, but unlike love, lust emanates from fantasy, both conscious and unconscious, in which one’s more familiar sense of self (and other) is altered. Erotic desire can be thought of as the desire to disassemble existing psychic structure in favor of some alternative organization to experience imagined aspects of self and relational experience that have often been spoiled, damaged, lost, denied, or repudiated [p. 650].

Similarly, Avgi Saketopoulou’s (2013) work on ego-shattering sexual experience is helpful here in understanding the work of the sexual vignettes in *Testo Junkie*. The self-shattering sexual vignettes in

⁴For a complex and nuanced discussion of this function of the analyst, see Avgi Saketopoulou’s (2011) “Queer Children, New Objects: The Place of Futurity in Loewald’s Thinking” (pp. 38–39).

this book are not unrelated to the ego-shattering sexual experience Saketopoulou has recently described. Saketopoulou redefines “perverse sexuality” as a “sexual process” that is “experienced as transgressive in a way that destabilizes the subject’s psychic equilibrium, pushing her into dysregulation, into the too-muchness of experience” (2013, p. 257). She argues that, far from being traumatic or retraumatizing, this process can facilitate an ego-shattering experience that the subject experiences as generative and pleasurable: “As the ego unravels, condensed meanings that shaped the sediment of the unconscious and of sexuality, the primal moments where our alienated, divided selves got formed, leap forward. When released and able to breathe freely ... enigmatic states may now be revisited” (2013, p. 264).

Following Saketopoulou’s reading of perversity, we can understand Preciado’s use of self-shattering sexual vignettes as a just such a “perverse aspiration” in Saketopoulou’s terms, designed to shatter the ground of gender’s enigmatic—and not-so-enigmatic—implantations. What Saketopoulou (2013) makes so clear in her essay is that there is a powerful potential alliance between the clinical psychoanalytic process and the generative work of perverse sexuality, as both seek to open up lost aspects of self that want to be found. Similarly, what’s brought forward and released in Preciado’s vignettes is *both* the enigma of the ego’s unravelings *and* a potential unraveling of the larger cultural codes that lock gender experience into place.

So perhaps we can start with the idea that the in-and-out movement of *Testo Junkie* is an effort to represent something unrepresentable. To shatter the subject and in so doing to bring into being a new subject that lives on the edge of intelligibility. Normative gender both imposes some meanings and evacuates others; Preciado’s project intends to disrupt this process. But rather than adopt an interpretive strategy of signifying this absence—this hole in the cultural symbolic—the book opts instead to “fuck it.” To fuck coherence and fuck formulation itself. Action is, after all, our resort when thoughts and words fail. Action is a way of speaking to the unintelligible.

And perhaps we can say, then, that it is precisely “fucking” that provides a link between the analytic and the social. Like Preciado’s political treatise, psychoanalytic work also aspires to enable the recovery of lost and repudiated aspects of subjectivity. Analytic time may be slow and melancholic rather than fast and ecstatic. But isn’t psychoanalysis, in its ideal forms, also an important site for the *undoing* of gender’s coherence and for imagining queer and postqueer futures? Although for Preciado, analysis might seem to traffic too much in identity, I argue the opposite. To my mind, the analytic encounter is one space in which we strain to think the unthinkable, where cultural illegibility can be written into the record. Where the splits imposed upon the subject by constructs of gender and heterosexuality can be disassembled and undone. Ideally, an analysis doesn’t shore up identity; it works against it, looking for the ambiguous, contradictory, and ineffable in subjectivity. We seek to formulate the unformulated and that *is* a political project, even if it occurs at the level of the individual subject.

Gender as mass dissociation

Rather than declaring the radical critique of gender to be outside the reach of psychoanalysis, then, I would carry it into the heart of the analytic context. Although this is an argument I can’t fully elaborate here, gender might be understood as a kind of mass dissociative process. We all conspire, first, to ignore the fact that gender is merely a somatic fiction. Second, and more important, we conspire to ignore the fact that *gender is inherently traumatic*. Psychoanalytic feminism over the past couple of decades—and I’m thinking especially of Jessica Benjamin, Judith Butler, Ken Corbett, Muriel Dimen, Virginia Goldner, and Adrienne Harris—has worked hard to theorize and clinically demonstrate various forms of gendered trauma. To use Butler’s (1995) language, all of us, however our genders/sexualities may be configured, have suffered the foreclosure of possibility in the realm of gendered and sexual experience perpetrated by the unqualified belief in gender. And so—this is crucial—this foreclosure is traumatic, not only for those who are consciously distressed by the coherence and omnipresence of the specific gender into which they’ve been interpellated, but also for those who experience gender identity as an unremarkable process.

The concepts of “dissociation” and of what Donnel Stern (2003) terms “unformulated experience” can help us name and understand the psychic processes and mechanisms that accomplish this foreclosure. Stern suggests that we may harbor a “wish not to think,” to remain in what he calls a “familiar chaos,” wherein we unquestioningly accept the familiar and restrict our freedom of thought (p. 63). He writes,

Defensively motivated unformulated experience is a kind of “familiar chaos,” to borrow a phrase from Paul Valéry, a state of mind cultivated and perpetuated in the service of the conservative intention to observe, think, and feel only in the well-worn channels—in the service, actually, of the wish not to think. The “chaos” refers to the natural form of undeveloped thought. Experience maintained in this state can carry with it a comforting sense of familiarity. It may be banal and unquestioned, but it feels like one’s own [p. 84].

Although I have put in a plea in this paper for the uses of “dumbness,” the kind of dissociative nonthinking Stern describes is of a different order completely. It represents a shutting-down rather than an opening-up of imagination.

My concluding suggestion, then, is that this shutdown is the work of normative gender. That, in short, gender puts a stop to thought. It dictates that our bodies do the “knowing” for us and that we accept as truth whatever our bodies appear to signify. To be sure, gender gives us a set of naturalized and unconscious scripts to live by that short-circuit and limit experience—Stern’s “well-worn channels” of thought. But moreover, what I hope to convey here is that rather than thinking of gender as an *imposition* of meaning, we might theorize it instead as an *evacuation* or an expropriation of new meaning—a refusal to signify, a defensive stoppage in the free play of signification. If we accept this assertion, then we move one step closer to an account of the work of gender that can be called, in the clinical sense, dissociative. And we can also see how important such a clinical observation might be to the sociological problems gender imposes. Given this, and given that gender is, of course, not the only socially sanctioned difference that violently interpellates us, our task as analysts is to understand what we, as individuals, as a field, and as a culture, dissociate or keep unformulated.

Of course, such an analyst is every bit as futuristic and emergent a subject as our testo junkie. It may be true that clinical psychoanalysis—as currently practiced—has, by and large, continued to aid and abet the mass dissociation that is gendered coherence. We have a lot of work yet to do to correct this ongoing history. Still, it seems even clearer to me that the psychoanalytic consulting room is one of the most fertile, political spaces for enabling the emergence of marginal, banished subjectivities. Maybe together we can think the unthinkable.

Notes on contributor

Kirsten Lentz, Ph.D., LCSW, practices psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in New York City. She is an advanced candidate at New York University’s Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. Lentz studied social theory, feminist and queer theory, and film at Brown University and clinical social work at New York University. She is interested in the way culture and power bear on the clinical situation.

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Falling: *Jouissance* or Madness

Carolyn Stack, Psy.D.

Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis, Inc.

ABSTRACT

Testo Junkie's (Preciado, 2013) far-reaching exploration of desire elides the abject, the (culturally inculcated) underbelly of sex. When speaking of desire clinical psychoanalysis and the academy use similar language regarding fragmentation and the shattering of self. But for clinicians a distinction must be made between *jouissance* and psychosis. The former requires a transcendence of shame; the latter is imbued with the abject. This essay argues that the burden of unmediated shame is left to the reader of *Testo Junkie*. A clinical vignette illustrates the juncture of desire, shame, and fragmentation and the necessity of the analyst's understanding of the difference between *jouissance* and madness.

Plunged into the meticulous preparation and frenzied pace of *Testo Junkie* (Preciado, 2013), I too penetrate the skin: I am gel coldly disintegrating into the epidermis, into subcutaneous tissue, close now to blood vessels, nerve endings, glands. Later, I am fluid, sucked into the needle, plunged into a vein. A razor, a face now here, now there shimmering in shards of mirror. A video camera running—no turning back now—black leather couch, white wall, black cocaine in the sharp V of premium glossy white stock paper, a mustache fashioned from spikes of shaved hair. Familial glimpses—the pulse quickens—a mother who harangues a daughter, a father who loves his cars, a girl with a facial malformation pushing through the brutality of adolescence ...

On the book jacket blurb Jack Halberstam tells us *Testo Junkie* is a wild ride. No kidding! Absorbing the text, I round many corners at breakneck speed, hit a few guardrails along the way, almost shoot off the cliff. It's 1961 and I'm in my father's spanking new British car—a shiny beige Wolseley. We are at the top of the town's peninsula, poised at a stretch of downhill road. On a test drive. Faster than I've ever traveled, my dad and I whoop and holler when the speedometer needle shakily hovers over the 100 mark. No need to say, don't tell your mother. I'm already treasuring our secret.

Testo Junkie speaks of post-Fordism, of cars and fathers, of tomboys and tears, of loss. I am hooked.

Yet I also shield my eyes, gazing through the parted fingers of one hand the way I do when a movie crime scene is too much: at once too tantalizing, too repellent. I look away when a rocky cliff over the ocean winks at my dad and me beyond the car's winged W hood ornament. I refuse to look when the memoirist's shades are flung wide open: two shiny black dildos in orifices, high on testosterone. Too close, a voice inside me screams. Too much! Too soon! Torn between the poles of giddy excitement and the abject, I am all too happy to move on to the safe ground of a smart brain. Familiar terrain here, text on paper, words I know, explaining, explaining. I can now pretend that I don't know the experience of body experiments, of mind-altering drugs. My blood slows. I have thwarted my own fears and shame about sex and experimentation.

Testo Junkie fluidly crosses boundaries between intellect and bodily sensation—between ideas and desire. The text takes us on an emotional, intellectual, erotic, genre-bending trip. When I pull back from the heat of the text it strikes me that something is missing, something about the abject. *Testo*

Junkie doesn't directly address shame or that which is reviled and this feels like a glaring absence. Muriel Dimen (2005) tells us that "shame partners pleasure from the get-go" (p. 13). In order to have sex, to contemplate sex at its best, we must muck about in bodily secretions that we've been taught to revile. We must undo a lot of training to not only transcend but also to embrace the disgust/pleasure of vaginal secretions and piss, of shit and drool, semen and blood.

Without a nod to shame in the text the reader is left with the burden of the body's underbelly. How can we not peer through the curtain of another's private sexual and body experimentation without feeling the (culturally inculcated) impulse to look away? We do not belong here; we are not supposed to be here; suddenly we become unwitting Peeping Toms. Perhaps *Testo Junkie* has transcended the bounds of shame or perhaps that which is reviled in our culture has been pressed to the margins, leaving the reader to grapple with these affects.

There is no doubt in my mind that *Testo Junkie* is a courageous and unusual polemic, daring to reach beyond the confines of the socially acceptable. But I also wonder if it does this at the expense of the recognition of the inextricable link between sex and bodily shame. As a clinician I am acutely aware of the havoc that shame wreaks upon an individual's development of subjectivity, of freedom of thought and creativity and, of course, sexual desire and pleasure. Turn over any rock, peek around the corner, shame is always lurking. So much of my work is about uncovering shame, understanding it and finding a way through it. Shame reminds me of those sticky substances that adhere to everything that touches it. According to Riccardo Lombardi (2007), shame derives from an ontological conflict linked to our relationship with our actual bodies. It restricts our thinking to the concrete and it threatens our connection to our physical beings. Following both Dimen's and Lombardi's arguments it would appear that shame is culturally linked to our relation to our bodies and that it must, in the course of healthy development, be reckoned with.

Sexual excitement requires a reckoning with shame. One must inhabit a strong enough body-ego (Freud, 1923) unfettered from the extremes of shame in order to follow desire into the shattering of self and a loss of psychic organization and coherence that Bersani (2010) argues is the sine qua non of sexual excitement. We must be able to trust desire to fall, be shattered and reconstituted—somehow—at the other end. To lose ourselves in sex then is to lose the culturally mandated sense of self. We are not who we think we are; for a moment we cannot claim to be an "I" or at least the "I" we cling to tenaciously. What courage we must have to go there. Courage and a felt sense of containment.

The absence of shame in *Testo Junkie* requires that I, the reader, feel that affect (my own and that of the text) in my body and, if I am not to throw the book across the room, I must grapple with it.

Allow me to return to the clinic where shame abounds, where, at its most lethal, it binds my patients to rigid defenses that, once pierced, threaten to send them into fragmented states. In psychoanalysis we use the same language as the academic discourse on sexuality: shattering of self, falling apart, fragmentation. But here, rather than describing a state of *jouissance*, we are speaking of neopsychotic states of disorganization. Far from celebration and pleasure we are in a world of horror where the mind and body do not cohere, where the threat of obliteration is always around the next corner. The clinician approaches the patient's imaginative world with trepidation and terror. She enters the abyss of threatening annihilation with the patient in order for both to muck about in the endless chasm of nothingness, enough to dilute the shame until she and the patient can bring words, shapes, images to that which has heretofore been unthinkable/unbearable. Without crippling shame we can bear to think, to face the worst and, in Wilfred Bion's (1962) schema, to help the patient build a "container for the contained," a kind of psychoanalytic capacity to do work on his or her own lived experience.

A clinical moment: a patient in her 20s is taking more sexual risks, wanting to move away from her usual U-Haul pattern of making a commitment on a first date. Up until this point we have understood this pattern as a protective device against the annihilating anxiety of longing and desire, of having no container for her yearnings for contact with a desired other. Relationships—although short lived—have tended to be safe havens that she has desperately needed, has clung to and

subsumed herself in the world of the other. She cannot bear distance, separation, and difference between herself and the other. She wants now to have numerous partners, to have fun in ways that she hasn't allowed herself. This desire is fraught with shame—not shame about sex but she wonders if she is being selfish to want such a thing. Isn't she merely setting up others to be hurt by her? She casts her terror of getting hurt onto the other; it is difficult for her to claim her own fragility at being a separate subject.

As she speaks of her desires her skin is flushed with what I imagine is a combination of excitement and exposure/shame. She has a new tattoo. It signifies doing something impulsive—as if she's not caring what other people might think. She's putting her hesitation and anxiety aside, “so that I can live my life as I want.” She's breaking free, I think, of parental authority, of her superego, and of a society that tells her to toe the line. But she's also trying to break free of the confines of her own restrictive story, to fall into an embodied world where she can claim a separate subjectivity.

The patient says she's very anxious about a date she has that evening after our session. It's a second date with someone she hasn't had sex with. She wants to take it slow. She's wearing a special T-shirt, she tells me next, in a confessional tone. She hesitates and giggles. It's the shirt she wore for her first session with me, chosen specifically to convey her desirability—both a defense and an invitation to her new therapist. The T-shirt then is a stand-in, what D. W. Winnicott (1969) called a transitional object, a self-soothing object that acts as a parental substitute to bind anxiety and existential terrors of falling apart.

In this instance the patient is using my presence—not yet imagined or conscious—as a sensate fabric against her skin to hold together all that threatens to break through and destroy her. The T-shirt/therapist encases her breasts and her new tattoo, soothing overwrought feelings and anxieties. As she approaches standing in the liminal space between together and separate, the space of tremendous anxiety where she must exist alone with her desire and not merge with the other, she brings the metaphoric body of her therapist with her to contain the uncontainable. This patient, at this particular time, needs to find herself not having sex, not falling into the embrace (or fleeting container) of the other. What's at stake here is not so much the activity of sex or the nonactivity of sex but the patient's capacity to find something of her own that links to her therapist that builds her own psychoanalytic function, the capacity to think and wonder and choose whether to fall (in love, into sex, into the imaginative) or not.

Finally, my task as an analyst is similar to my task as a reader. *Testo Junkie* pulls me this way and that, injecting me with affects that are difficult to bear, sending me climbing death-defying mountains and plummeting free fall over vertiginous roads in a runaway car. My primary task is to face into what lies before me with eyes wide open, heart alive to the other—whether a text or a person. As Winnicott (1969) would have said, my primary analytic task is to survive. To survive the patient's attempts to bat me away from her shaming spaces as well as to survive the free fall with the patient into her own and my own madness. *Testo Junkie* has entered my clinical work. The text reminds me to always be in a place of unknowing, to follow the images and affects, to not foreclose on anything because of fear. In this manner, *Testo Junkie* holds my analytic feet to the fire. But the text also reminds me that the denial of one's shame is dangerous in the clinical setting. If I cannot claim my own disturbances, anxieties, shame (at least to myself) I leave the patient grappling alone with the very affects that she needs help with.

Testo Junkie, of course, does not have the same responsibility to its reader as the clinician does to her patients. The text doesn't have to directly reckon with shame. However, the trace of that which is reviled is evident in *Testo Junkie*. It's in the sadomasochistic play with threat and danger that runs throughout the text. This play with danger is the sign that points us to the underbelly of sex, to the frightening fall, to the terrors of primitive states that link to shame. Yet the underbelly is hidden from direct view through displacement. That is, the intellectual commentary of the text acts as a kind of container for raw emotion. I am left with the thought that *Testo Junkie* is both an unusual act of courage and a culturally normative escape from that which we would rather not see or feel.

Notes on contributor

Carolyn Stack, Psy.D., is a psychologist/psychoanalyst in private practice in Cambridge, MA. She is on the faculty and is a supervising analyst at Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis. She is the co-editor of *Bringing the Plague: Toward a Postmodern Psychoanalysis* (Other Press, 2002).

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Memento Mori: The Book as a Cut

Jamieson Webster, Ph.D.^{a,b}

^aPrivate Practice; ^bEugene Lang College at The New School

ABSTRACT

Despite *Testo Junkie's* overt criticisms of psychoanalysis, this essay attempts to read the formal aspect of the work—as a process of mourning, a body-essay, an experimental protocol of intoxication—through the lens of the everyday practice of clinical psychoanalysis. Looking at the way soma erupts in the consulting room, the conundrums of agency and identity, Preciado's (2013) work on the biopolitics of the psychopharmacopornographic era is shown to be critical to any unraveling of a symptom. On a more personal scale, Preciado's own stated intention that the writing of the book should function as a cut, as a *Memento Mori*, is read in this essay as a depiction of the extreme limits one must traverse to locate an experience of desire, beneath or beyond the apparatuses of the state—something that Preciado shows as penetrating further into our lives and bodies than many of us are prepared to acknowledge.

I want to tell you about my clinical practice and what Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2013) has brought to the surface for me before I talk about the book itself, which I want to think of as a kind of *Memento Mori*. The two, I hope, will meet under this sign or relic that functions as a reminder of death, a death's head, scar, or cross. What I have in mind is to think the psychoanalytic clinic anew in light of a work that, although written and read, underscores a practice: "a voluntary intoxication protocol," a body-essay, "a fiction" (nevertheless) of soma, of somapolitical selves, a eulogy to William, a search for his body, and perhaps most important for myself, what Paul calls "a single point in a cartography of extinction" (p. 13) ... again, a *Memento Mori*.

To begin: Because of this book, I've thought most about a long-term patient whose obsession with testosterone runs in exactly a reverse course to what Preciado does in *Testo Junkie*. Maybe it's not exactly the reverse? It's felt that way. Testosterone, for my patient, is an antidote for what he thinks of as bad estrogen. This bad estrogen makes him want to be a woman. Testosterone will solidify his male identity. The whole world is obsessed with testosterone, he tells me; this isn't simply his own fantasy or idiosyncrasy. He would like to join the world of men. So, his efforts aren't a way of hijacking one's body back from the biopolitical state, from the pharmacopornographic era, of experiencing the multiplicity and ambiguity of gender, but rather of solidifying it in an even stronger binary, in concert with a kind of reduction of life to biology, with a testosterone-fueled environs.

I don't know. That doesn't seem an entirely fair or just description. One could think of my patient's desire for testosterone as a practice that, at its extreme, is an attempt to take something for himself. The ambiguity of gender controls his every move. If gender is hormonal then it can be about a bodily practice. If cross-dressing can be situated as caused, hormonally, then masculinity can open into a practice too, hormonal, performed, indeed performed hormonally. But, performed masculinity doesn't feel masculine enough and the hormones are not a performance. All in all, none of this feels like his act.

The desire to ingest something that grounds him once and for all feels reactive. He has described his female states as becoming "a little horny bitch," "a moaning whore." The solution

to this gender-bending intrusion, the acoustic persecution, is to turn passive into active, to make what invades into an object of consumption, creating a fast, seamless, signifying equivalence between whore-moans and hormones.

Many sessions feel as if it's me against the hormones and I can find no third to alleviate this battle-to-the-death. This is why I posit the case in opposition to *Testo Junkie*. What Preciado plays out is a voluntary experiment with testosterone, an act that is his and that must be his at all costs, and so not part of the armature of the state, not another prosthetic device prescribed to the masses, parasitic on subjectivity.

As a result of work with this patient, I had come to hate the word *testosterone*, which would roll off my tongue with a feeling of vitriol, a saying of gender at its most concrete. So I'm estrogen, I would think ... maybe I'm even that toxic bad estrogen hiding in overmedicated genetically modified chicken breasts. I should be a free-range chicken, I suppose. Still a chick. Ugh. And then I was asked to read this book—"give me a break," "no, not this." Gender is "molecular"? Gender is only attackable at the level of soma? I've wanted to throw the book across the room.

Preciado tells me, "Ideas aren't enough." I think, maybe I should have studied Reiki. Some of my patients like to tell me about their body healers with a kind of glee—they get right in there, to the root, to the source. I'm just a lot of words, words, words. I think about raising my fee. I think about our mutual conversion disorders—theirs in their body and mine as baptism by psychoanalysis.

This book shakes all of this ... psychoanalysis, Paul tells us, is a trafficking in substances between analyst and patient, semiotic homeopathy; the unconscious is a chemical terrain that we manipulate, that we use and risk mutation. Seeing psychoanalysis this way would be more radical than turning psychoanalysis into an epistemology (even when it is an "anti"-epistemology of unknowingness), or a theory, or simply applied ideas and "psychological accounts." Instead, let's think psychoanalysis *as* conversion disorder.

Fascinatingly, if we look at Freud, in an early paper "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense" (1894), we can see that conversion hysteria is the only neurosis whose transformative defense structure provides the psychical system with a gain rather than a permanent and infinite defensive structure that acts as a negative siphon on the psyche. The gain comes because the ego frees itself from the contradictions of a traumatic experience. "Instead ... it has burdened itself with a mnemonic symbol which finds lodgement in consciousness, like a sort of parasite, either from an unresolvable innervation or as a constantly recurring hallucinatory sensation, and which persists until a conversion in the opposite direction takes place" (p. 49). The idea or traumatic experience is successfully repressed and forms a second psychological system, decisively splitting the subject, while the ego is free, but for a parasite that leaves it prey to innervations or hallucinatory sensations coming from the body. Although the idea of psychoanalysis as therapy would always be to transform the conversion into body back into memories or ideation more generally, I think Preciado wants us not to travel backward but forward. We need to push this conversion as far as it will, forward, into unknown gains and surplus, to harness the power of this parasitic irresolvable—and, that's the important word—innervation. Psychoanalysis is not deconversion but the most radical conversion.

There are other patients I'd like to tell you about in light of this—women especially who are confused about what their gynecologists told them at 12 or 14 or 25 or 40 about their periods being "irregular"; that they don't have ovum, only cysts; that they have too much testosterone, or not enough estrogen; that birth control is the only solution; that they'll be in pain; that they'll be moody without it; that they'll, God forbid, get pregnant; that abortions will only further the problem, or solve it; that machines can explain to them the destiny of their femininity; that medicines and technologies will help them become pregnant at the exact moment that they want to, or, at the very least, all of this will streamline an otherwise messy being.

These women often feel as if they have never known their own bodies, stuck in a fantasy of what was, or might be, having always lived with a body mediated by drugs. It feels impossible to know the difference between these medications and their body, these medications and the strange admixture that is fantasy and subjectivity. Impossible to find some demarcating line in a system that makes

body, subject, and object indistinguishable. My patients seem terrified of losing this pharma-object that stands between them and their bodies, leaving the question of gender, or indeed desire, in a state of suspension.

Some psychoanalysts have wanted to tell me that this is simply the mechanics of fantasy—it's birth control; what's the problem? These pharma-objects become more than what they are *because* they are neurotic. It's the same when patients tell you about the side effects of their antidepressants. You take it, it helps, or it doesn't. I'm the one who participates in their fantasy of what this is doing to their subjectivity, to their bodies. Their subjectivity should be outside or beyond what are simply the tools of an age. How can we argue against birth control? Antidepressants have saved a lot of lives. Subjectivity is always implicated in technology, isn't it? The Greek *techne* shows us this link between art, artifice, technology, being, and politics. It's as old as civilization. *I'm* clearly hysterical. Searching for some yesterday, some purity, some a priori being, that never was. But, oh my God, all the people on psychopharmacological medications! It's so overwhelming. I'm secretly devastated. I find a relief in Preciado's descriptions of this regimen that infiltrates our bodies, and although it is a crisis, Preciado reads forward, jumping into the future: gender has never been more abstract, reality has never been more liquid.

On the other side, many men I see who watch pornography, who cannot find a way to stop masturbating, who buttress their sense of identity and contain all that anxiety through a daily ritualistic consumption of sex, mirror these women and their pills. It feels to me as if it doesn't matter what is said about the pornography in session—endless detail of what's watched, the orifices, the cum-shots, the trolling of craigslist escapades or escort service ads or, if not said, it will always be the blind spot in a day, there in its silence, like the black space between dreams or grocery lists. I cannot locate a desire in this stream of images, in this bare life ... I cannot. I know I'm supposed to. Maybe I'm a bad psychoanalyst. But from my end, it feels as if it needs to break or fall away or both. Preciado tells me I'm in an absolutely new era: the production of neo-non-subjectivities via frustrating satisfaction, a whole network of masturbatory cooperation, penetrable bodies.

What unites these patients in light of Preciado's work is the necessity for a cut, a break in this chain, the reflexive loop, an incessant stream of being. He is right. "Ideas aren't enough." It feels as if it is becoming harder and harder to create something on this order of effect. We are "spinning in neutral," the bad infinity of psychoanalysis turned philosophy. As analysts, we should see that we are working against an immense system—the state penetrates deeper and deeper, into our very biology, regulating our lives not from the outside in but from the inside out. Our act, if it is an act that works against this, would be radical. That in its radicalism, it veers on terrorism, hacking, mirroring the trauma it seeks to transform because the act has the character of a shattering, ingested by the patient, rupturing, breaking-in. Preciado sees the transfiguration of transference love as a hyperproduction of "affects," a "prosthetic system of psycho-somatic information," "a cybernetics of addiction" (pp. 400–401)! Freud's self-analysis is the model; his self-testing of everything.

This follows what Paul calls "the axiom of the lamb" (p. 389)—God sends himself to earth in the form of a mortal body, enduring the passions, offering that body up for sacrifice, in order to test the limits of humanity in the name of humanity. This sending of oneself, testing oneself, is the desire for an interruption, a caesura producing a time before and a time after, the irrevocable distinction and difference between old and new, one generation and another. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben says in *Pilate and Jesus* (2015) that Jesus "must attest in history and in time to the presence of an extrahistorical and eternal reality ... to testify, here and now, to the truth of the kingdom that is not here means accepting that what we want to save will judge us. This is because the world, in its fallenness, does not want salvation but justice. And it wants it precisely because it is not asking to be saved. ... This is the paradox ... here is the cross; here is history" (p. 42). Neither will meet. This is the always-deferred collision between two worlds, the impossibility of either judgment or salvation. The only name we can give this state of being, Agamben says, is *incessant crisis*. "Like trauma in psychoanalysis, crisis, which has been removed from its terrifying place, reappears in pathological forms in every sphere and at every moment. It is separated from its decisive day and transformed

into a permanent condition” (p. 58). The point for Agamben is that we should live as if in end-times; form ourselves as a point of the greatest tension in what Preciado calls a general “cartography of extinction.” We cannot go backward. We can only move forward.

I want to tell you about the patients, who, right off the bat, exist as incessant crisis rather than in its covering over; whose way of being seems to testify to this impossible bifurcation of life that renders everything arbitrary. They come looking for the place that Preciado is looking for, “where desire really emerges” and they know it is only at the limit and have their eyes fixed on this outer edge. They engage in the fight for an impossible agency, an agency heretofore unknown but an agency that always, eventually, undoes itself, especially in the tumultuous vicissitudes of dependency, the commitment to crisis. They live in this impossible flux. Paul tells us it is the search for body, sometimes one’s own, sometimes another’s, that addiction is the use and play with an object that will never desire you back so that you can know your desire in its purity, reconfigure reality, self-legislate consumption, and arouse the most intense affects as lines or rifts of vulnerability.

This is the *test* in testify. This is the *test* in testosterone. I think of the patients who test you, who test limits, borderlines, boundary blurring—the ones who make mental health practitioners angry and vulnerable in their challenge to every ideological strain that holds fast to the idea of being part of a “helping” profession. These patients will test every aspect of your identity and your identifications because they cover over the place where *your* desire emerges. And if it is closed, if your being is sealed in this way, how can you ever help them with their project, with this search? They test the One. Testosterone. The word is starting to feel a little better to me.

Sometimes these extreme practices go away as an analysis progresses and the patient looks suddenly neurotic: self-conscious; overcritical; emergence of a harsh superego; a need to be productive, efficient, a good girl or boy, live by a schedule, wake up on time, join the rest of the world ... and I feel morbidly guilty. What have I done? You were so much more interesting before you started talking to me. And then I think twice about *everything*: I was so much more interesting before I became a psychoanalyst.

The psychoanalytic complex, including its institutes, doctrines, and their codified judgments, set up in theoretical camps, and the administration of training, doesn’t feel so very different from the pharmacopornographic complex: the avowed production of frustrated satisfaction (what we like to think of as the moral and mental virtues of frustration tolerance or delayed gratification); the manufacturing of analysts like small armies. We, who are supposed to really “be” at home with ourselves—authentic, *feeling*, together, feeling-together, authentic together. Where is the crisis? And then add to it: get up, go to work, your patients are dependent on you, on your consistency, therapy like a factory; industrialized regularity ... is it so very different from popping a pill? Not nice thoughts. Thank you, Preciado. I had enough doubts as it is.

I won’t crash us in the conundrums of the distribution system of psychoanalytic power. The difference that I would like to end on, one available to analysts and gender terrorists alike, and that this book allows me to locate, has something to do with the order of desire and its relation to the cut—we are all, together, searching for the place that desire is alive, and we are trying to find a means of cutting into this space.

Jacques Lacan (2006) writes in the essay “Position of the Unconscious” that he understands well the point of impasse: “the point at which one can do nothing but oppose ‘the marionette’s mask to wooden insults’ and remain stone-faced through the centuries, rooted to a hoax, waiting for someone to find a better hold than the one it clings to in its judo match with the truth” (p. 710). Desire here is, if not dead, then stagnant. Wooden. Rooted. Waiting.

The place in question, Lacan (2006) says, is always the entrance to the cave, the mouth that stands between simulacrum and light. And Although one might imagine seeing the analyst enter there (in every cliché of the unconscious), it is not so easy, “as it is an entrance one can only reach just as it closes (the place will never be popular with tourists), and the only way for it to open up a bit is by calling from the inside” (p. 711). Lacan is being funny, but he’s also dead serious about what it means, and how difficult it is, to call “from the inside.” This conundrum is not as unsolvable as it sounds, he promises. But it requires that we understand how any opening closes, and so we must study “the consequences of the irreducibility of the cut” (p. 711). Nothing could be more clinically important for Lacan.

My contention is that Preciado's book is about *this* knocking from the inside; about the irreducibility of the cut; about autobeholding and topological restructuring. This book tells us something about how difficult it is to gain access to desire, how precarious that work is, a work of mourning, a process of disidentification, the finding of a new object of love, William to VD, but none of it (and why should it) looks the way mourning has typically been depicted. Mourning on steroids, mourning as acephalic falling and 236 days of soma-fiction. Although the book is written for a dead person, in communion with him, with the disease that killed him, it is also a book in concert with so many "unavowable deaths" that shape a generation.

It is mourning as the paradoxical coming to terms with the useless organs that we carry around, that we never needed, but that were usurped nonetheless, or organs that we never even had and yet still need to find a way to lose. It is about a process of separation based on a final disenchantment with representation, "ideas aren't enough," a parting of ways with the desire for salvation, "no one will be able to do anything for my happiness," in order to accept living in constant crisis. Testifying to this, to a life, finally, of ethical resistance. A book = A death. *Memento Mori*: the book as a trace of a cut, of having been knocked sideways from the inside. You test the one, you break it in half. You are a *Testo Junkie*.

Notes on contributor

Jamieson Webster, Ph.D., is a psychoanalyst in New York City and a graduate of the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research. She teaches at Eugene Lang College at The New School and supervises doctoral students at The City University of New York. She is the author of *The Life and Death of Psychoanalysis* (Karnac, 2011) and co-author (with Simon Critchley) of *Stay, Illusion! The Hamlet Doctrine* (Random House, 2012). She has published in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Cabinet Magazine*, *Apology*, and *Playboy* as well as having written clinical and scholarly articles and book chapters in many psychoanalytic publications.

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