

LIVING
DEAD
SURPLUS

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ODA
HAUGERUD

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INTRODUCTION

Through tubes and hands the stomach is filled with nutrition and pharmaceuticals. Before infusing the pills, the ones that can't dissolve in water need to be ground. After cleaning the tube, filling it with water to avoid air being pumped into the belly, you connect the tube to a longer one. The next step is to attach it to a machine that pumps with a frequency that can be regulated on a display. The food is transported through the sond into the gut. When the metabolic process is over, the body eventually needs a release. If the body cannot perform it, laxatives act as micro prosthetics.

When learning how to sond feed, my perception of the boundaries between the human and the machine were confronted. Through the experience of working as a caretaker between my studies, I saw how gestures of care can institute an intimate power relation. The job was to learn how to use in the best possible way, for the different-abled people cared for. I witnessed this tiny part of the world of medicine where pharmaceuticals for altering basic needs and bodily functions acted as prosthetics. Having previously tried to grasp this blurring of boundaries, of what constitutes a

body and subjectivity, my socially constructed knowledge was now destabilized.

Around me I see another world where alteration is driven by acceleration. Where gestures meant for care from misuse turn into invasive, categorizing and controlling acts of power. In our capitalist condition I believe commodities and machines through technoscience¹ to a large extent script us and not the other way around. Substances act as fictional characters of prescribed and gendered subjects, for bodies to embody and live up to. Capital seems to become anthropomorphic, merging with our metabolic loops in an economy centred around consumption and technical management of the body. As bodies to various degrees become automated and performed on demand.

I believe feminist approaches to technology and subjectivity such as the cyborg condition offer liberation – but are in part hijacked, and used for economic interests. In this way financial growth seems to circulate and intensify through the gendered material body. As a young woman I experience my body to be targeted by our condition to the extent that I find it impossible to avoid being personally affected. When I speak of being a woman or a man, I speak about the social construction of what constitutes being a cis-woman or a cis-man.

This thesis is a network of thoughts, from personal experiences, artworks, inventions to digested theories from which I speculate on the relation between commodification of bodies and its desires. With an emphasis on libido, I put excretions and potency in the centre for political thoughts.

¹ *Technoscience* definition: Technology and science viewed as mutually interacting disciplines, or as two components of a single discipline; reliance on science for solving technical problems; the application of technological knowledge to solving scientific problems. (Oxford Dictionaries)

I dive into substances such as Viagra, as concepts in relation to art and the growing neoliberal economy. The chosen objects of research are only zoom-ins of a complex, medicated and chaotic world that I myself find hard to grasp.

I explore this topic with a great interest for the hidden, manipulative and sometimes microscopic protagonists that both instrumentalize and expand bodies and how we look at them. I discover how leakage and management of it, is tied to both gendered oppression and emancipation; and how our performance becomes mutually scripted and subverted through floods of images, prosthetics and props. Subversion meaning strategies that aim to overthrow, destroy or undermine an established existing system with its set of beliefs, instead of accepting our status quo. In large I follow the human body through the confusion between the state of subject, object and abject. It is precisely this hidden ambivalence, destabilization of identities and orders that I am interested in.

I

THE ENDLESSLY BUFFERING PORN SCRIPT

In the documentary *Do Communists Have Better Sex?*² (2006) the orgasm frequency in GDR (East Germany) is compared to West Germany during the Cold War. Statistically, the orgasm frequency is claimed to be drastically higher in GDR rather than in West Germany, for women in particular. The documentary suggests that this “aphrodisiac” might partly be explained by a higher level of gender equality as men and women were financially more equal in east than in west. The documentary shows that women in West Germany were to a large extent housewives – whilst women of the GDR were encouraged to work. The high amounts of orgasms in GDR is further explained by scientists as a consequence of the higher level of knowledge spread about fe-

2 André Meier, *Do Communists Have Better Sex?* (2006)

male orgasm and the importance of clitoral stimuli.

I'm sure equal finances and scientific research is optimal for great sex, yet I find the idea of measuring orgasm frequency to be a clinical and controlling approach to intimacy. Similarly, the notion of biopower, defined by Paul-Michel Foucault (1926, FR) through *The History of Sexuality* (1978) is described as a new form of productive power, a carnal power that penetrates the body of the modern individual.³ How the human body acts as a machine, centred around optimization and discipline increasing its usefulness.⁴ If previously controlled by institutions we were now programmed for productivity, which makes the management domesticated and self performed. Foucault underlines the centrality of sex and of sexuality in the post industrial society.⁵

How is gender inscribed, performed and subverted today? How does capital morph and circulate through the body? How is this commodification manifested and transgressed on molecular level? Why is the cyborg partly problematic within this condition?

CUM SHOTS & ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Within pornographic representations the gesture of urinating on someone, a so called *golden shower*, is mutually for sexual

³ Paul B. Preciado *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 68
⁴⁻⁵ *ibid.* p. 68

gratification and humiliation.⁶ An even more common protagonist in the theatre of sex is the *cum shot*, the act of ejaculating sperm onto someone. Most likely onto a face, a butt or another body part belonging to a young female body. Apart from being a common and degrading action, the drama of a load being unloaded is a heavily represented image. *Methyl Cellulose* is an artificial sperm used in pornography as a prop for scenes including cum shots to extend the load for a more sensational image of release. A visual prop establishing the sensation further, extending the body to what it cannot achieve. An image of exaggeration and excess, of capital.

*The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image*⁷

In relation to Foucault's theory on biopower, a recent theory is laid out through Paul B. Preciado's (1970, ES) *Testo Junkie* (2013). Preciado calls our condition the *Pharmacopornographic Era*, in short described as a time where bodies, sex, excitation, the demand for erection and ejaculation are at the centre of political production and economy.⁸ A time where we are being confronted with a range of micro prosthetics asking to control our subjectivity. The term *Pharmacopornographic* refers to the processes of a molecular (pharmaco) and pornographic control of sexual subjectivity.⁹ A description of an era where some of our world leading industries such as pharma and pornography are in the business of creating

⁶ Golden Shower <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=golden%20showers>

⁷ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1974)

⁸ Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 40

⁹ *ibid.* p. 40

desires for optimizing, automating and regulating the human body through technology. This production of pleasure is bound to repetition, where following loop, is repeated: *Excitation-Capital-Frustration-Excitation-Capital*.¹⁰

In relation to loops of supply and demand, Judith Butler's (1956, US) Gender Performance Theory formulated in *Gender Trouble* (1990) becomes relevant. Butler defines all bodies as scripted and narrated through performative repetition of processes of political construction. In other words, gender is constructed from actions that require repetition. This is both a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of socially constructed meanings.¹¹ With body Butler means, not as a "being" but a fluid boundary, a politically regulated surface scripted to perform in accordance with a choreography so well taught that it becomes hegemony, and hard to deviate from.

In pornography, sex is a performance socially and politically monitored for public representations. This choreography regulated by gender codes becomes a theatre that has no value outside this given system of representation.¹² In this infinite loop, maybe in the shape of an 8, an endless möbius strip, repetition is the mechanism that the existence of gendered roles depends on. The repetition of pornographic images and the production of body enhancing substances symbiotically establish the performance. I see this as the porn script and the medical prescription colliding, and together constructing a scripted track from which capitalism is able to direct our desires into norm conforming behaviours. We rehearse our performative acts from a

10 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 40

11 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge Classics, 1990) p. 178

12 Paul B. Preciado *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 266

scripted notion of intimacy when watching porn, to later on performing them in intimate situations. This repetitive loop also inhabits a process of such intensification that it reminds me of a youtube-clip, a figure-of-8 racing compilation I once stumbled upon. In the clip you hear the audience cheer increasingly as the cars crash. The audience screams and applauds, entertained by each other's failures. The racing driver Mark Martin was ironically even sponsored by Viagra. An important micro prosthetic in a world longing for potency.

*The anthropomorphism of Capital is complete when its fictitious character is generalized*¹³

The repetitive gestures of excretion and power become problematized through the work of the artist Pamela Rosenkranz (1979, CH). Rosenkranz work often has a biological or medical approach and refers to art history. The work *My Sexuality* (2014), which consists of a collection of abstract paintings on aluminium, was painted by her under the influence of the potency enhancer Viagra. She concretely placed these body-sized aluminium plates, against clear plastic that she wrapped gallery walls with, and took Viagra to paint. The aluminium sheets were painted by hand in layers of slimy serum-like polyester medium, with a mixture of pigments in various nuances of flesh tones. In previous works she ironically paraphrased painters such as Yves Klein pointing at our male dominated art history. Within art such as abstract expressionism, a generally male dominated field, emotions are allowed to "leak", being ab-

13 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials For a Theory of the Young Girl* (Semiotext(e), 2012)

stract and ambiguous. Since these abstract expressionists in my experience are often also categorized with geniality, their paintings acts more as illustrations of male privilege than anything to me. The audience claps again, endless is the splash.

I see Rosenkranz action of taking Viagra to paint as problematizing how abstract expressionism historically is a practice loaded with stereotypical masculinity. I find her exaggeration of “masculine” potency to be on point. Exaggerated by her consuming Viagra, a pharmaceutical designed for men, these cum shot-like abstract paintings make a clear point, yet remain ambiguous through abstraction. Rosenkranz deviates from and dethrones the serious in a witty way, when suggesting Viagra as molecular prostheses for her as an artist. The repeated usage of sterile aluminum as canvas further adds to an alienated experience of the body – of the excretion as part of a scripted system of power and capital. Rosenkranz seems to point from a feminist understanding of art and science that I share. A feminist standpoint towards the role of the scientist is that this is a position of power shaped by and that shapes the power and social relations in its historical and cultural context through the artefacts produced by them.¹⁴ I believe this can be applied to the role of an artist as well. Rosenkranz is an example of many young artists working with what I see as *subversively clinical* gestures; appropriating and playing with the language of power, with the central idea of transgressing boundaries or making statements even on molecular level. By some this is seen as a new wave of *molecular sculptures*¹⁵ in which the role

14 Deborah Lynn Steinberg, *Feminist Approaches to Science Medicine and Technology* in Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader* (Routledge, 2000) p. 193-194

15 Ruba Katrib, *Molecular Sculptures* (Art in America, 2017) <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com>

of the artist as scientist, or science experiment, collide. In turn this mirrors my understanding of how we increasingly seem to become our own lab rats.

Amongst many, the Anthropocene¹⁶ feminist discourse has offered theories as to how technoscience could be productive, and serve as potential for equality. In the theorist Donna Haraway’s (1944, US) *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1984) the *cyborg* was defined as a body were boundaries are blurred between animals and humans, self-controlled, self-governing machines of automation and organisms. In this way Haraway laid out suggestions of how science could redefine subjectivity. In Haraway’s opinion, one can consider any body a cyborg-body if it is both its own agent, and subject to the power of other agencies.¹⁷ I believe it is therefore fair to think that a cyborg is a body altered by molecular prosthetics such as pharmaceuticals – or in fact any body under capitalism.

*I ran. I ran until my muscles burned and my veins pumped battery acid. Then I ran some more*¹⁸

In the Vice-produced documentary on the phenomena *Chemsex*¹⁹ (2015), the question of pleasure and libido enhancing drugs becomes more complex. Chemsex concretely refers to having sex while on synthetic drugs and has become a common phenomena within parts of the gay community. The documentary follows people with differ-

16 *Anthropocene* definition: *Relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.* (Quoted from Oxford Dictionaries: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anthropocene>)

17 Jennifer Gonzalez, *Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research* in Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden, *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader* (Routledge, 2000) p. 58

18 David Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)

19 William Fairman, Max Gogarty, *Chemsex* (2015)

ent experiences of the Chemsex scene in the UK. The people interviewed who are critical towards Chemsex feel so inclined due to the destructive nature of overconsumption. In the documentary, the popularity of Chemsex within the gay community is traced down to escapism deriving from internalized shame. They feel this is a reaction that stems from the AIDS crisis in the 80's, where infected bodies became heavily stigmatized. The documentary shows how Chemsex has led to increasing forms of addiction to substances such as Crystal Methamphetamine and GHB. A clinic specialised in the specific problematics around Chemsex has opened in the UK. The physical nature of this addiction is explained as any addiction. Becoming self-consuming from repetition over time through desiring more and feeling less. To desire until your body cannot live up to your desires, making it into something similar to doping within extreme sports.

I was always fascinated by the Soviet-born Swedish elite athlete Ludmila Engquist (1964, RU), world renowned for her gold medals in 100 hurdles and her doping scandals, which happened during my childhood. The complexity and drama of the anabolic process that was going on inside and outside her body still fascinates and upsets me. For the strong emotions that her doping led to, how she went from being loved by the Swedish people and named the "Swede of the year" to simply "a doped Russian"²⁰. Engquist's destiny was cruel, the price to pay for not being "pure" in the context of extreme sports is much higher for a woman than for a man, especially being positioned as an immigrant. Voices in media clearly declared her crime, their disappointment

20 Arne Lapidus, *Från "Årets Svensk" till "Dopad Ryska"* (Expressen, 2017)

and the death of her carrier was a fact. The transgression to do such a thing as doping herself, to cheat on nature, was beyond expectations of stereotypical womanhood. The will to push your body to the physical limit and beyond its borders is conditioned. It is dependant on context, which body desires this, and in what way. In one way her performance was molecularly scripted, from the anabolic hormones she consumed, on the other her action of consuming this form of male-coded hormone might have been transgressive. Engquist left Sweden after an attempt at committing suicide after a long process of receiving threats hatred – similar to a witch hunt.

In Preciado's *Testo Junkie* doping gets a new meaning. In what he names as *body essays*, chapters describing him taking Testo gel, a gel containing the artificial male hormone Testosterone. Preciado states he actually does not take testosterone to become a man, he simply takes it to write. By doing so he, similar to Rosenkranz, underlines a gendered power structure and transgresses it. Preciado writes that he sees the testosterone as a prosthesis camouflaged in gel form "at the price of becoming gel".²¹

TRIPREPORT

Date: 10/10/2016

Substance: Ritalin 10Mg

I take the Ritalin 10Mg prescribed to me. Not because I believe in it but as an experiment in being stabilized, focused. All I feel is numb. My sense of reaction and time is blocked. I can't even ride my bike. "It takes a few months to get used to it but it will make you less impulsive". The intended artificial sense of "calmness" comes with side effects. Hands shaking. Vibrating, maybe going out of battery.

21 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press, 2013) p. 412

DYSFUNCTION AS FUNCTION

Many women ejaculate a fluid as they orgasm, the origin of this fluid is still unknown.²² The imdb.com description for the film *Flubber*²³ (1997) is as follows: “Professor Phillip Brainard, an absent-minded professor, works with his assistant Weebo, trying to create a substance that’s a new source of energy and that will save Medfield College where his sweetheart Sara is the president. He has missed his wedding twice, and on the afternoon of his third wedding, Professor Brainard creates flubber, which allows objects to fly through the air.” An alternative interpretation of his character could be that this “Absent-minded professor” represents all the scientists who did not discover the full clitoris until 1998.²⁴ The fictional discovery of “Flubber”: a disobedient powerful secretion, might then be a liberated squirt, female ejaculation which in reality is a material yet to be discovered scientifically.

*An increased awareness of clitoral stimulation is good for
sexlife and gender equality but bad for the economy
and car construction*²⁵

22 Paul Spinrad, *The Re/Search Guide To Bodily Fluids* (RE/Search Publications Inc. and Juno Books, 1994 & 1999) p. 68

23 Les Mayfield, *Flubber* (1997)

24 Helen O’Connell, *Journal of Urology* (American Urological Association, 1998)

25 Jonatan Unge (quote), *Februaripodden Episode 8: The East German Orgasm Frequency* (2016)

40% of all women according to statistics have a “sexual dysfunction” – the inability to climax from penetrative sex.²⁶ The idea of orgasm is generally sculpted from a phallogocentric heteronormative perspective where penetration is standard. Amongst many attempts to solve this “orgasm-problem”, or supposedly creating more, the absurd orgasm machine “E-Spot” has been created. A surgically placed implant helping women to climax by pushing a button. Women who modified their bodies with this electrode implant expressed they couldn’t climax the *normal* way. Although, one of them later on in an interview states that she could climax from clitoral stimuli.²⁷ It is up to any(body) to modify themselves in anyway they wish. Whilst looking at the power structures in the foreground, some technoscientific creations alongside a lack of research on the female body allow penetrative myths to exist. I find it very problematic how the E-Spot not only hijacks feminist rhetoric around sexual liberation and enjoyment for commercial reasons, but also re-establishes dusty old myths about sexuality and gender.

In 2016 the female version of Viagra, a libido enhancer for women called *Addiy* was released. A pink pill that in contrast to Viagra, which was created for men already in 1989, does not take sex drive for granted. While Viagra is meant only to treat the physical unwanted impotence, hence no libido enhancer needed, *Addiy* alters the libido itself. In descriptions and commercials online, the companies who market these micro prosthetics appropriate medical terminology in order to gain credibility.

The Pill, the name to summarize different types of con-

26 Suzan Larsdotter, *Sexjuk*, (Ottar, 2017) <https://www.ottar.se/artiklar/sexjuk>

27 Jonatan Unge, Ola Söderholm, *Februaripodden Episode 10: Viagra* (Podcast, 2016)

traceptive pills, has been reconsidered by many feminist scientists and theorists. This is in part due to its entanglement with pharmaceutical lobbying – its financial interests and hidden invasive powers of control. It is claimed that the invention of the Pill acted as a starting point for what Foucault outlined as biopower.²⁸ Marking a new way to regulate and manage the human body. Not many consumers, of the numerous variations of the Pill, are aware of their side effects. The Pill “pauses” the reproductive system by putting the body in the state of an artificial cycle. To name a few side effects; It is proven to disrupt the hormonal balance, libido, reproductive functions, increases risk of cancer and heart attacks and affects the immune system for women.²⁹ Hormonal manipulation can of course offer endless liberating potential in blurring our binary boundaries of what is distinguished as male or female, natural and artificial etc. This is a use of hormonal “hacking” that should not be confused with the general critique of the Pill. The pill was designed for women, packaged in the shape of panopticon prison architecture, for a reason.³⁰ Simply as a way to control the female body, designed as a domesticated tool for self management. The impact of the side effects from the contraceptive in relation to the fact that it is prescribed for 14 year old girls like I was, cannot be reasonable. It goes beyond the politics of artificiality and simply comes down to invasive acts of power.

*The things you own end up owning you*³¹

28 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 68–69
29 <https://www.1177.se/Fakta-och-rad/Rad-om-lakemedel/Preventivmedel-med-tva-olika-hormoner/>

30 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 192

31 David Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)

Apart from regulation of reproductivity, the process of hysterization of female bodies acted as an important historical starting point of biopower or “the process of sexual modernization”.³² Vibrators and dildos were originally invented as a medical instruments used for treating women with hysteria, whereas now they have been turned into well known commodities.³³ Although the commercialisation of sex toys in this way may seem subversive, and maybe also to a large extent is, I argue that the production of products and prosthetics such as these is also tied together with an ongoing orgasm-cult, a demand for orgasms. If the 60’s sexual revolution in simple terms was about being entitled to subjective pleasure as a woman – acting against being objects of someone else’s appetite – we now reached the point of orgasm being demanded from us. The same system that the liberation movement tried to oppose has managed to recapture the body and its drive again.³⁴ I see how this rebranding and image making of female desires mimics the male stereotype of a *high drive*, a desire for speed as it shows productive for economy. The E-Spot does not necessarily let you enjoy multiple orgasms but *asks you to* in a certain way. It also confirms the level of entanglement between financial surplus and lack of research on what society constitutes as the female body. It allows the embodiment of an orgasm cult and creates new definitions of sickness identities looking similar to Hysteria. It is, for some bodies, today possible to be *pathologically unsatisfied* sexually.

The idea of sex not being emancipatory becomes clear through Jean-François Lyotard’s (1924, FR) research on *Libidinal Economy* (1974). As Lyotard states that enjoyment

32 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 68–69

33 Michael Castleman, “Hysteria” and the Strange History of Vibrators, *Psychology Today*, (Psychology Today, 2013)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/all-about-sex/201303/hysteria-and-the-strange-history-vibrators>
34 Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation* (2015) <http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/>

within capitalism is not necessarily liberatory, pleasure not pleasurable.³⁵ Instead he sees our libido as completely intertwined with economy. The nature of spending money, of exchange, circulation and production, reveals the way the libido works. We might think that we can escape capitalist production of libido but to Lyotard we are unconsciously “tuned in” on it.³⁶ This means that even anti-capitalist critique is fully tangled up in libidinal economy. Keti Chukhrov (RU) problematizes the relation between libido and economy further stating that the same language that categorizes and controls sexuality generates its seductive and subversive power.³⁷ She believed thinkers such as Foucault and Lyotard revealed the ambivalent nature of sexuality and the unconscious yet also left room for a subversive and liberating role. I believe Chukhrov is right, even if we are trapped in the conditions given there must still, depending on your level of privilege, possibilities for subjective and subversive acts.

*The extreme extent
of male
impotence, of
female frigidity
or rather
of vaginal dryness
can be interpreted
immediately as
contradictions
of capitalism*³⁸

35 Keti Chukhrov, *Sexuality in a Non-libidinal Economy (e-flux journal) in What's Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?* (Sternberg Press, 2013), p. 299

36 – 37 *ibid.* p. 299

38 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials For a Theory of the Young Girl* (Semiotext(e), 2012) p. 128

We all use our own bodies to various degrees as sites to inscribe power, gender, desire, beauty, fitness, health, pleasure and sexuality acting as sites of commodification, display and production.³⁹ To become non-instrumentalized and non-commodified is an act of resistance, difficult to achieve in our global culture of aggressive streams of marketing.⁴⁰ Through technological innovation inequalities become reproduced – and this is something that the financial system seems to gain from. The success of technoscientific industries relies upon transforming depression into Prozac, masculinity into testosterone, erections into Viagra, fertility/sterility into the Pill.⁴¹ We can no longer determine which comes first: our depression or Prozac, Viagra or an erection, testosterone or masculinity, the Pill or maternity.⁴² Some gendered cyborgs appear more trapped by their “mechanical parts” than liberated through them.⁴³ To embody a figure of automation and autonomy within capitalism, as the cyborg narrative, there is a risk of easily becoming a productive instrument for further producing surplus. In this way new technology is often far from being gender-free, as gender follows bodies into the new technologies.⁴⁴ At the same time these prosthetics inhabit space for subversion.

39 *Common Knowledge and Political Love* in Beatriz da Costa, *Tactical Biopolitics: art activism and Technoscience* (The MIT Press, 2008) p. 238

40 *ibid.* p. 238

41 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic era* (the Feminist Press 2013) p. 34

42 *ibid.* p. 34

43 Jennifer Gonzalez, *Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes From Current Research* in Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden, *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader* (Routledge, 2000) p. 61

44 Alison Adam, *Feminist Ai Projects and Cyberfutures* in Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward, Fiona Hovenden, *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader* (Routledge, 2000) p. 286

TRIP REPORT

Date: 15/8/2017

Substance: Gestagen

My ovaries ache from my endometriosis when pooping out yesterday's glutamate enhanced dinner. Ironically enough, when the pain occurs you are supposed to breathe the same way as when giving birth. The doctors (cis-male) prescribed a hormone spiral letting me know I should insert it to use the artificial hormone Gestagen to "starve out" the potential cysts between my vagina and my rectum causing the pain. I asked him why this spiral, that was not created to be used as a medication, is now used as such. Tripping on it may, amongst many side effects, affect my libido and that is something I don't want to fuck with. The answer is short, "it worked for many people and if you don't take it you run the risk of becoming infertile if you're not already". In other words, I am reduced to a baby-machine where my measurable reproductive skills are medically more valuable than anything.

II

CANNIBALS, METABOLISM, & ABJECTION

The digested notion of biopower led me to see our bodies and minds in a state where subjectivity splinters from commodification. *Subjectivity* – as in what enables and conditions our thinking. At the same time I saw space for subversion. When visiting Art Rotterdam 2018 I saw art physically circulating as commodities in front of me. Paintings wrapped in plastic handed over to new hands. Other hands shaking new hands belonging to bodies in suits. The crisis of capital in 2009 offered an “economization of art” that has been described partly as a commercialization.⁴⁵ If exchangeability was previously a defining feature of art trading today we are increasingly faced with objectification of time in art production.⁴⁶ *How are artists aiming to subvert orders of commodification, of being contained within this condition?*

45 Franz Schultheis, *Kunst und Kapital* (2015) referred to in Diedrich Diederichsen (*Over*)*production and Value*, (2017) p. 3

46 Diedrich Diederichsen, (*Over*)*production and Value* (Sternberg Press, 2017) p. 19

UTILITY MAXIMIZATION

In the original version of the artist Wim Delvoye's (1965, BE) work *Cloaca* (2000) he created a large "digestion machine" using mixed media. A physical cycle that repeatedly produces an excretion similar to faeces. The work looks like an industrial machine of steel with lab equipment such as plastic tubes, stainless steel construction and glass containers. You can follow the process of digestion and its transformation through fluids and the brown colour of the faeces through the tubes and the containers. The faeces finally comes out and is later on vacuum packaged with the logo "Cloaca" printed on it. Further, the packaged Cloaca with its commercial logo design, similar to familiar brands, is understood as a commodity because its directness and play on consumerism culture. I believe the cynical and cyclical sense of meaninglessness and absurdity is its success. The absurdity continues as Delvoye made it possible for people to purchase the packaged Cloaca faeces in his studio.

In general, Delvoye literally seem to suggest how loops of economy merge with loops of the body, along with a commentary on the art world being full of shit. In a dark sense this loop reminds me of the capitalist expression *Utility Maximization*, the question of how the consumer should spend their money in order to maximize their utility. I'm mutually excited and disturbed by the metaphoric faeces as an entity containing surplus value. An important con-

ceptual gesture behind this piece is to me that Delvoye at first refused to sell the machine. After all he actually did sell it to the Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, Australia. When finding out the machine in itself was sold (and not only its packaged excrement) the work disrupts its own logic to me, or at least my assumption of it. The destabilizing of what was the system and its outcome makes the position of the maker uncertain. In a way Delvoye's work also becomes its own enslaved cliché of the system. Through repetition and, and more importantly, his gesture of appropriating the process of mass production, what I first saw as "subversion" is instead a carrier of market value (if there necessarily is an opposition here). The idea of "fooling the system", of gaining credibility from using the gestures of power become morally problematic. As credibility is gained for other reasons one might think the success of the artist relies in the fact that he does exactly this, imitate the already existing system of power. In turn this resonates with the system of commercialization and objectification of art and its production, as in Delvoye's case. If the act of producing an art piece, similar to excreting, becomes commodified and produced on demand this suggests *excretion as currency*.

If going back to the substance and the management of excretion, it clearly to do with *abjection*. As we tend to feel disgust for the most fundamental things of all. Abjection is a state of neither subject and object.⁴⁷ Or more concretely as Julia Kristeva (1941, BG) defines it through *Powers of Horror* (1980) abjection is a subjective horror, the feeling an individual experiences when confronted with one's *corps incompleteness*.⁴⁸ Further described as between what is self

⁴⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 1

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 27

and other, “a me that is not me” full of filth, sickness and other rejected parts of one’s subject or identity. The term *Abject art* refers to artworks which explore themes that transgress and threaten our sense of cleanliness and propriety particularly referencing the body and bodily functions.⁴⁹ Abjection, to Kristeva, disturbs conventional identity, cultural orders and concepts. What disturbs order is generally seen as something that poses a threat, which ties the abject to the idea of perversion.⁵⁰

Food contempt is perhaps the most elementary and most ancient form of abjection. When expelling, puking it out in spasms, Julia Kristeva explains that the subject is established since the puke is not an other.⁵¹ In this way abjection is important in establishing our subject. Another view on release is carried through the eating disorder Anorexia, as it hides a fantasy to free oneself from being a body colonized by commodification.⁵² To reduce into nothing. The same hatred of the flesh as desire of reducing oneself to physical purity, to the bones.⁵³ Perhaps of seizing control when there is none other given.

The artist Olga Balema’s (1984, UA) installation *Cannibals* (2015) consists of a series of sculptures all called *Threat to Civilization* (followed by a numerical order for each sculpture) placed on the floor partly leaning against walls. White curtains divide the room, which is reminiscent of a hospital. The sculptures are made of sealed PVC plastic shapes in the approximate size of a body, full of water and metal. The metal belonging to pieces of Balema’s former sculptures in

49 *Abject Art* definition by Tate <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abject-art>

50 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 15

51 *ibid.* p. 3

52 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials For a Theory of the Young Girl* (Semiotext(e), 2012) p.129

53 *ibid.* p. 129

an ongoing process of rusting inside the water. The metal pieces creates a sort of skeleton. Balema literary created a cannibalistic process, feeding off her previous work that makes the work in between the state of abject and object. I am not sure whether I’m watching death or something coming to life, an uncertainty I find interesting. The process of one work feeding of the other conditions and gives the agency of a new subject in a way. A parasite constructed to feed off itself.

Balema’s ingested sculptures, abstracted from the shape they used to be, are in a state between consumed and cap­suled at the same time. The PVC speaks of longevity, as plastic can’t decompose, in contrast to the rusting pieces that will eventually vanish. Maybe this confusion of boundaries is what the title proposes as a threat, similar to abjection. Apart from dealing with abjection Balema’s work has similarities with *vanitas*. A theme commonly occurring in medieval painting traditionally used to reminding us of our ephemerality. *Vanitas* include motives such as skulls which symbolically showing the transcendence of life, a certainty of death.⁵⁴ In comparison to this idea of carnal obsolescence, or of life, Balema’s construction is suggesting a state between living and dead.

In the film *Death Becomes Her*⁵⁵ (1993) the character, played by Meryl Streep (1949, US), drinks a pink elixir to remain young forever. Her effort in defying death and decay is fuelled by rivalry to another woman, the lover of her husband. The film is humorously showing how her body, even if immortal, starts twisting and falling apart in unexpected ways. Through holes in stomachs and breaking of

54 *Vanitas* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanitas>

55 Robert Zemeckis, *Death Becomes Her* (1993)

necks she bends. The moral of the film can be summarized partly to a cliché of the obsolescence of life elixir. While reducing a structural issue to vainness in a stereotypical way, the film also manages to point at it in a humorous way; what is otherwise often portrayed as uncanny and monstrous.

In the artist Hedda Viå's (1986, SE) video work *The Longevity Factor* (2014) described on her website as "a horror slideshow of the current Healthploitation". We see the logo of the World Health Organisation, followed by a text describing a new epidemic called "Incarnated War (ICD-10-CM-F58)". This fictive diagnose is further described as "A war against the self from within characterized with a wish for longevity". This disorder is ironically presented as a new registered illness. There is dramatic music in the background, followed slide show of appropriated online imagery of animated bodies, animal skeletons and a human hand holding onto a turtle. Photos of sick bodies or with prosthetics follows one after another as a montage. A voice-over speaks about this "everlasting war" at the same time as stock photos of circles of water and hands overlap a photo of a dementia patient. Through subversive appropriation and juxtapositioning of chaotic online images and modes Viå's work problematizes the conditions of being rendered sick. The voice-over speaks of today's accumulation of imitation and self objectification while images of decaying and wounded turtles and human bodies merge. It's all presented as a surreal and tuned up version of what can be recognized from reality. Similar to Balema's work, the video ends with a text explaining how the former subject is now transformed into a silent resource.

I find it interesting how Viå traces down the sickness of our condition to our desires simply through existing images and words. Shifting the definition of sickness into the exploiting longing for health and longevity. A cannibalistic process where capitalism feeds of bodies through instrumenting subjects to feed off themselves, by many described through the image of the zombie.⁵⁶ A figuration describing the state of the living dead. Dead perhaps because of lacking subjectivity and alive as in living labour. When value extraction is made even from the dead the world becomes even more uncanny. As bodies no longer display value in the current global economy being as alive or dead. As long as embryos can freeze and conserve, what matters is to what extent it can be productively integrated into the global economy.⁵⁷

TRIP REPORT

Date: 3/9/2017

Substance: Super Magnesium 375 Mg

Acceleration. My limbs buffer with Super Magnesium 375 Mg and the Anti-Age Oil is merged with my sweat. It said 30+ on the package but I'm 26 years old at the time. "You have to start early". "Your mother has a lot of wrinkles". "The good ones, the good wrinkles though", he fills in. The bathroom echoes with repeated actions filled with the same amount of self-indulgence as selfhate. My mortality and a sense of abjection resonate within the tiles. This space acts with passive aggression, covered up in a seductive sensual exterior with manipulative hidden forces. In here scripted loops of digestion flattens my body, asks it to buffer, being filled and released. Here I am as far away from my body and as close as I can be. Yet here, the smell from the air freshener never manage to cover my shit odour.

56 Hedda Viå in email conversation with Benjamin Noys, *Protes, Metafor och den Obsoleta Kroppen* (2014-2017) p. 20

57 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (the Feminist Press, 2013) p. 45

FILLERS- FEMINISM

In the last few years, I have seen a new wave of feminism around me. This position is by some called *Fillers-Feminism*⁵⁸ or *Beauty Feminism*. *Fillers* is symbolically referring to a plastic surgery treatment where the size of the lip is increased through injections. The Fillers-feminists sees no room for double punishment in a world praising beauty yet downgrades female coded attributes. The hypocrisy of our power structures makes them see the gesture of injecting fillers as a potential subversive liberating action, a feminist act. Plastic surgery and self-indulgence through beauty enhancing treatments are seen as tools, a feminist strategy in an attempt to add value to feminine coded attributes and interests that are generally devalued. Resisting stereotypical beauty as a woman is not premiered and that is the *double punishment* I believe the Fillers-Feminists mean to avoid. I see how people exaggerate and extend their boundaries through attributes signified as female. Sometimes seen as self-objectification this form of staging is similar to transgressions of drag. Within drag culture a female-female impersonator, a woman exaggerating stereotypical femininity through make up, clothes and her acts, is called a *Faux Queen*.⁵⁹ A subversive bodily act that points out gender as a construction. Female coded interests can for sure hold the power of subjectification, as an interest, hobby or art form

⁵⁸ Term coined by Tone Schunnesson (BANG/1, 2017) <http://www.bang.se/fillersfeminism/>

⁵⁹ Faux Queen https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faux_queen

that on an individual level can go beyond sexist ideals. Despite the fact I see the empowering possibilities the role of the Faux Queen achieves through performing identity (of choosing what you want to become), I am critical towards the necessity of constantly becoming and conforming to the role of being a woman when it becomes even surgically asked of the female body.

The by-product of Fillers-Feminism has for me personally mainly accumulated into new pressures to conform norms, just from another starting point or even meta-level. I see the same desire of having the ideal female body as I did before, only now this desire is tagged *feminist*. On one hand, it has become a privilege to not desire props, to not long for becoming on the other is it a labour. I personally find this labour, of filling the standard image of how a woman should look, to be exhausting. Imagining feminism as a power in opposition to the status quo, I now see how many aim to affirm the market that I believe on a large scale need to be resisted. A strategy not especially subversive in a consumerist world fixated by competition and the self, a system we talk about changing but seem to stagnate in over and over again (myself included). All the injections I could do, all the possibilities are becoming closer and more real, just making myself further away from identifying with inhabiting a material body. If not commodified, obsessed with, categorized and capitalised on, there might be a liberating boundlessness to seize here. Keeping in mind being a white cis-woman like myself enables me to choose and resist my privilege to a large extent in comparison.

In no way am I preaching for the “pure” or “natural”, I reject the existence of such ideals as they are harmful. Many

bodies gain nothing from that narrative, from glorification of nature.⁶⁰ There is no opposition between being critical towards hegemonization of excessive consumption, or of norm conforming alteration, yet being critical towards the false concept of “natural” in my opinion. I do not criticize the individual act of manipulating the body in general but the system that ultimately controls it. Questioning if Fillers-Feminism, on a structural level holds the possibility to expel the idea of natural or just emphasizing it more. I can't seem to redefine products such as Anti-age oil or surgical procedures such as a facelifts as emancipatory. More than anything their existence are reminders of my own death and decay, resonating with the thematic of a vanita and the process of purifying abjection. I find no other pleasure in it apart from it holding the reminder of once becoming released from the commodity value of inhabiting a young female body.

Identification of anomalies seem to increase as science and the medicine industry becomes extensively privatised and infused with economic interest.⁶¹ Being abnormal, needing to consume or desiring alteration becomes financially productive. The successful strategy of capitalism is the constant lobbying, though images and words, for us to believe we are sick. That our value can only be inscribed and extracted from the productive body. Even aging is portrayed as a sickness to be treated. As for plastic surgery, it is clear that its tied to time or more precisely about a gendered fight against time and mortality, a longing for longevity. We treat our bodies from the outside and in, inside and out with the idea we are in need of purification of

60 Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation* (<http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/>, 2015)

61 Hedda Viå, Samuel Richter, *Protes, Metafor och Den Obsoleta Kroppen* (Kungliga Konsthögskolan Stockholm, 2017)

the unwanted while contributing to growth. In *Fight Club* (1999) the character Tyler creates soap out of stolen human fat from a plastic surgery clinic. He steals the physical waste from liposuctions in plastic bags in a dumpster. The voice of the narrator speaks: “Tyler sold his soap to department stores at \$20 a bar. Lord knows what they charged. It was beautiful. We were selling rich women their own fat asses back to them.”⁶²

TRIPREPORT

Date: 1/6/2017

Substance: Glycerine

I stayed at a rich friend of my father's house. He had an expensive-looking designer house in southern Sweden with smooth marble sculptures and a chlorine smelling swimming pool. A typically successful white cis-man within advertising. In his shower there was a very expensive-looking soap, a “natural” olive oil rosemary soap. I needed to shower off the day so I took my clothes off and started to indulge my body with it, initially feeling comfortable and luxurious. The smell from the soap reminded me of something, something very familiar but not from this place. It took a while to know what it was. Covered in soap as I realized it; a piece of meat. A piece of meat marinating itself with olive oil and rosemary. That's it. Either a cannibal consuming my own flesh or preparing my own flesh for consumption. At the same time, I know I always was.

62 David Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)

III

MEDIATING THE ABYSS

In 1977 the American anthropologist Rose Khon Goldsen (1917, US), in *The Show and Tell Machine*, wrote “We are breeding a new generation of human beings who will learn more words from a machine than from their mothers”.⁶³ Interesting that she mentioned the mother, since when a woman speaks it is generally seen as disruptive.⁶⁴ *How does the act of leaking relate to writing and to mediating physical experiences into data?*

TRACKING THE LEAK

Whilst working within the field of medical care, one task I had was to take notes in diaries of certain bodily functions

63 Franco Berardi, *The Uprising of Poetry and Finance* (Semiotext(e), 2012) p. 19

64 Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 880-881

and excretions of the people my colleagues and I cared for. There is commonly a faeces-diary for each person, crucial in order to make sure that what is inside the body has been released, as constipation can become very dangerous. One way of helping someone to empty their bowel (as that bodily function is not automatic for everyone) is to gently put a fluid called *Klyx* in through the rectum. The plastic bottle with a tube ending is inserted and squeezed together slowly. You have to be careful to not release the pressure from the bottle as then a vacuum is created and the excrement comes out too fast. Within 30 minutes the excrement is released. You note the size or the amount of the faeces from small, normal to big in an analogue journal.

When joining a panel discussion at Frascati Theatre in Amsterdam on the topic of *Alterity* I found tracking to have another meaning. Amongst other speakers there was an anthropologist called Ellen Algera (1982) speaking about an app that enables woman to track their period, fertility and hormonal balance. Algera's research is about *digital self-tracking* which has become a popular method for collecting data to enable you to generally transform your body into a *quantified self*, a better version of yourself. I always felt sceptical about the idea of self-quantification and tracking for several reasons. Firstly, for the obsessive nature of self enhancement. Secondly, since tracking through apps allows for collected data being misused. As I believe molecular data to be valuable for a further management of capital, through the body. Misused data could possibly lead to making way for businesses to further capitalise on our bodies and desires. Algera on the other hand, believed that this type of demystification and gained knowledge of our bodies

could have an enormous liberating effect on anyone with a menstrual cycle. I know from my experiences with contraceptives that mediating my experience caused an “overly aware” or even hypochondriac state. Apps where to fill out sweat, pain and acne – a search for symptoms more or less created a detached relation to my body. On a larger scale I can see the liberating effect she was talking about since the mystification of the female body also leads to lack of awareness of it. Although this should optimally be possible without generalising, transferring and sharing the experience as data in an algorithmic app made by a corporation. There must be other ways than this enslaved embodiment of data. Other ways to demystify the body and keep agency or integrity intact.

The work *235,681K of Digital Spit (2010)* is made by the artist Anicka Yi (1971, KR) and concretely consists of a PVC plastic handbag full of hair gel. The title leads me to believe that it symbolically suggests saliva. The handbag is obviously acting as carnal entity, a body-like container with its leather skin parts full of the slimy substance. I interpret this as a commentary on the collision of digitalisation, consumer culture and body politics. The bag is a gender-coded prop, which I read as Yi pointing at commodification – and even trafficking of the female body. The exchangeable and mass produced handbag is perhaps also a reference to the private and intimate being exposed, put on display and objectified. The technology related title gives me the idea of the work speaking about becoming data, dematerialized or anthropomorphized surplus. The “saliva” might also be a symbol for speech as it plays an important part in how we formulate words. Here words become contained, yet also

exposed and measured. The tactility of the suggested saliva asks for attention through disgust, in contrast to the seductive aesthetic quality of the expensive handbags opposite. The title has an important role playing with new definitions of physical excess, mobility, maybe a flattened and digitalised body. The titles precise number 235,681K seems as a calculation, transforming the body or speech into data, tracked for commodification. Through her work, Yi opens up new possible thoughts on how we deal with abjection in relation to digital data. What cannot be commodified and extracted of value within our existing conditions?

TRIP REPORTS AS ÉCRITURE FÉMININE

The term *Post-Erotic* was coined in an cultural debate on contemporary literature in Sweden. When putting “post” in front of a word it suggest the position that the following word is consumed, worn out. It states it as dead maybe from being overused or overdosed. In 2017 the Swedish culture journalist Malte Persson (1976, SE) wrote an article⁶⁵ questioning why there was no “pleasure” described in the intimate relationships and sex in books written by two

65 Malte Persson *Därför är det svårt att skriva om bra sex* (Expressen, 2017) <https://www.expressen.se/kultur/bocker/brusex-bar-man-bar-i-barlequin/>

recent female debutants. He questioned if women’s suppressed pleasures made a comeback along with its internalised shame. It’s almost as if in his confusion he suggests a sort of pre-60’s sexual liberation-state. I find his question to be provoking as it implies the duty of pleasure as a woman, or to act as a lubricator. The thought that this “lack of pleasure” might possibly even be resistant towards patriarchy (towards himself) probably didn’t even strike Persson’s mind. Like everyone, he has internalized sexism deeply rooted in himself. Just as the pleasure economy asks bodies to enjoy, his frustration towards the transgression to that order becomes an illustration of the order itself.

One of the novels Persson referred to is called *Trip Reports* (2016) written by Tone Schunnesson (1988, SE). In response to Persson’s question Schunnesson wrote an article⁶⁶ disagreeing with his assumption that this has anything to do with shame, although partly agrees with his understanding that she is not interested in writing about polished, magical and “good” sex. Further Schunnesson describe how she always felt as if her sexuality – ever since her youth – has been hijacked and turned into a lifestyle project by capitalism and popular culture. All creating the image of a drive that should be glamorous and hot just like in TV-series such as *Sex & the City*. She explains how she wanted to write about a woman on a trip with a driving force that goes beyond attraction to or relationships with men in a time where sex is not necessarily liberating.

Schunnessons *Trip Reports* is written from the perspective of the protagonist in the style of *stream of consciousness*, an inner monologue. Constantly high, in affect of a variety

66 Tone Schunnesson, *Vi vill bara inte ligga med er* (Expressen, 2017) <https://www.expressen.se/kultur/ide/vi-vill-bara-inte-ligga-med-er/>

of synthetic drugs, expressing an disobedient lack of will to work, and further disobeying being fine with this. The language is rapid and sometimes cryptic. The speed asks me to read faster moving ahead through her nonlinear time span where fragmented memories are passing in a non-chronological order. It is all about the *I*, about the strong presence of a subject. I interpret the people vaguely described around this alienated protagonist as a reflection of capitalism. “The other”; a force asking her to become what she doesn’t want to be. The protagonist reflects upon her own lifestyle by stating she only wants to write and take drugs because that is the only thing that cannot be sold. On the back of the book it says “I am a perfect machine”. Perhaps mocking the idea of being a productive cyborg and instead without shame choosing to be driven by the external force of drugs situated in the western fantasy of the oasis of Thailand. Bodily fluids become carrier of both loneliness and utopian ideals of a collective, emancipation and memories. In one chapter the main character remembers how she saw her childhood in a portable toilet, how all of her own crap mixed with all the other shit, fascinated by how people were together there in the toilet. Her raw descriptions strike me through their explicitness and possibilities of being metaphors for something larger than herself.

The term *Trip report* is in general referring to a form of writing where a person describes their bodily experience of a trip when consuming a drug. They can be found on online forums alongside dosage, date of intake, followed by a description of the bodily experience of a trip from any kind of medication, drug or other substance. A mediation of one’s personal experience with the purpose of sharing this

intimacy with others. Schunnesson’s novel uses this ambiguously in her title *Trip Reports* (originally *Tripprapporter* in Swedish). The protagonist is, literally, “tripping” from her constant consumption of drugs, is on a geographical trip (physical) through Thailand but more importantly on an emotional (metaphysical) journey. All surroundings are vaguely described. The trip is mainly not the physical, the destination is not Thailand but the mind of the protagonist. The character is described through putting her emotional ride and altered subject in the centre. *Trip Reports* is full of dirt, abjection and transgression through the shamelessly and exposing writing of taboos of the female body and desires. Highlighting and describing the experience explicitly and directly not using the format of a trip report but as a concept. To choose to live destructively without romanticizing it.

*I can also scream my name under water, right after
I screamed his, hearing that I sound much better in my
mouth filled with salt water than in any other mouth
filled with a lot of tongue*⁶⁷

Trip Reports reminds me of the idea of *Écriture féminine* or writing the body, which is translated as *feminine writing*. This feminist literary theory originated in the early 1970s. The theory underlines the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text. *Écriture Féminine* as a theory lays ground to the importance of language for the psychic understanding of self. In doing so, it explains how

⁶⁷ Tone Schunnesson, (Quote translated from swedish) *Tripprapporter* (Nordstedts, 2016)

women, positioned as “other” in a masculine symbolic order, can reaffirm their understanding of the world through engaging with their own outsidersness.⁶⁸ Language is a state of abject when performed by a woman. Historically we have been silenced, through witch hunts and tongues even cut off. Speaking is, generally speaking, a transgression if formulated by a woman. If the language spoken is not in a masculine phallogocentric order it falls to the deaf male ear.⁶⁹ This is the core of Persson’s frustration. When women begin to write in ways he did not anticipate he finds himself in the unknown, in the abyss. In a story without a clear narrative, dramaturgy, beginning or end but with a clear subjectifying voice. A narrative and language so unfamiliar to him he chooses to criticize it as the only way he can deal with it instead of trying to understand it. To me the protagonist in *Trip Reports* interrupts the economy of gendered expectation, politics of pleasure using writing as her tool to ambiguously spill over.

The French philosopher Hélène Cixous (1937, DZ) emphasizes the importance of writing the female body and its pleasure. By doing so she sees how a new production of the unconscious can arise.⁷⁰ The telling of new stories deviating from the previous ones. She states that political works starts as soon as a women start writing beyond censorship, the gaze and masculine command. “As women go out into the unknown to look for themselves”. Or more concretely; when becoming strangers to ourselves we can possibly reaffirm our bodies through writing it.⁷¹ Cixous sees the outpouring feminine body as a female libidinal economy.

68 *Ecriture Feminine* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89criture_f%C3%A9minine

69 Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 880-881

70 Hélène Cixous, *Castration or Decapitation* (The University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 52

71 Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976) p.880

An *outpouring* not necessarily with sexual connotations but simply as speaking, moving through this world. A regime, energies and a system of spending not carved out by culture. A body or a story without an end. In this way Cixous challenges the earlier mentioned idea of a Libidinal economy formulated by Lyotard. By seeing subversive and subjectifying hope in both the excretion and in the outpouring act of writing ourselves. A possible emancipatory feminist strategy even under our medicated conditions. In other words when pleasure is hijacked by capitalist interest, Cixous give us a suggestion on how to take it back into a subjective experience. Visiting the unknown or the abyss, as Cixous calls it, is not a bad place. It is a place for the unconscious, where she believes, in opposition to Lyotard’s idea of a fully capitalist-contaminated conscious, a subject exists.

On a more critical note as Cixous talks about the unconscious and feminine, and states “her flesh speaks true”⁷² I believe she is problematically emphasizing a false “purity” of the female body. By instead not tying it to nature or biology I wish to expand the idea of “female writing”, from the perspective of “the other”, taking into account any non-phallogocentric narrative. A female body is not tied to nature or biology, only its constructed narrative.

There are many similarities between the act of speaking and excreting, the politics of allowing your subject to expand. Public toilets for men exists everywhere for us to be reminded of the unequal politics of unloading. The statue *Manneken Pis*, a fountain of a little pissing boy is in Brussels is a tourist main attraction, a must see. The later created *Jeanneke Pis*, a statue of a little girl pissing is not mentioned

72 Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976) p.881

in the tourist guides. The information about it on wikipedia included that it is seen as suggestive and controversial. In contrast to this, one of the most inspiring moments I have experienced was when I saw a woman in her 50's taking her pants off and released a shit on the tram stop in the middle of the day. With no shame, she smiled to the people looking at her. A part from being shockingly close and graphic from my tram window I felt enlightened, *refreshed*. It was liberating seeing her breaking such a fundamental bodily taboo through the most natural thing of all. The most threatening for civilization, to unload as a woman.

CONCLUSION

Inhabiting a body today, is to me a surreal and slightly scientific experience of alteration and mediation. Intimacy seems highly political, and with accelerating speed, have many possible side effects. Seemingly as a by-product of a global network of excitation and exchange. The conditions and result of capitalism, similar to an epidemic, creates new borders for illnesses. Prosthetics for care acts more as props for gendered performance of potency. It is now possible to have a pathologically low libido or conserve your body to go against time. These possibilities and phantom pains leading to more reasons to alter and consume. Capital is anthropomorphic, extracted from the body. Previously it was necessary to control bodies to obey through institutions while now desires are tuned in on capitalism to the extent so we do it ourselves since we believe in it, in our homes. Hidden forces of internalization domesticated the buffer of becoming, creating self consuming machines. Dysfunction serves as function, productive for economy – the state of abjection is a part of a global plan. New technology is often far from being “gender-free”, gender follows bodies into the new communication technologies. Abjection is present through

our social constructions of gender, of what is unwanted so that we can attempt to purify it. A constant search for what is wrong with us, what part of the machinery that needs to be fixed next.

*Illness, you say, is the only form of life possible in capitalism*⁷³

Pornography marks the ever increasing consumption, industrialization and commodification of intimacy. Doping gets a new meaning in our condition I see as a form of *Post-Erotic Capitalism* desiring potency and excretion as currency. Penetrative myths shape our leakage, manages thoughts, art and speech. Making art within this condition asks you to confront questions of commodification and subversive appropriation which has space for transgressions but also runs the risk of creating new scripts. This can only be exorcised when leaking not on command. This is why writing the body though the form of a trip report becomes interesting. A trip report is not ordered by someone, it has no conditions but a format. It is simply a way to exchange a subjective physical experience. It is not about the automation or invasive acts of power but simply experiencing the unknown. In our biopowered cyborg condition of medicated selves “writing the body”, mediating the experience, could possibly be translated to “writing the trip” or “writing the substance”. Does writing the experience of altered by a substance then become a subversive, anti-capitalist act? An interruption in economy production cycles and feedback loops? Perhaps it at least offers an escapism away from our conditions.

⁷³ Bruce Scott, *Turn illness into weapon: Mental distress from a Socialist perspective*, (Free Psychotherapy Network, 2015)

Similar to the online trip reports, the desire in reaching for intimacy in a wired clinicalized society seems urgent. Writing the physical might in itself be a subversive liberation within a scripted corporeal condition of automated data. Replacing the idea that pleasure depends on an infinite increasing consumption and instead a subjective experience.⁷⁴ I see this urgency around me. Through art, film, literature or simply from a woman having a shit on the street. An urgency to “de-phallocalize” the narratives of leakage as excreting in its most ambiguous form is conditioned and gendered. To spill over, to expand is the chaotic mixture of a privilege, a taboo, a duty and a must to exist. Making art might be similar to release a hold. This is hard to perform when the main part of our references to art history is phallocalentric and full of suppressed voices. Rosenkranz appropriation of stereotypical masculine attributes and gestures shows vital for showing an existing power structure. Fillers-Feminism for showing the artificiality of femininity. Although repetition of these narratives is confronting, searching for other voices in ourselves may be even more interesting and productive for equality.

How can we treat ourselves against the illness of capitalism in a way that does not lead to side effects or performs acceleration? How to further work against this epidemic, of digesting anabolic narratives of growth, surplus and productivity? What will the experience of inhabiting a material body, to exist, become? In what way will this affect art and its production process? Through molecular sculptures or through the body of the artist itself? Or will we become reduced to data, dematerialized and optimized? Or mon-

⁷⁴ Franco Berardi, *The Uprising of Poetry and Finance* (Semiotext(e), 2012) p. 77

strous unleashed cannibals, a disobedient threat to civilisation? An exploding container, a squirt? A slimy flubber that refuses categorization?

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