Opening Political Bodies: Gender Performativity as Resistance Under Pharmacopornographic Capitalism

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation of the performative reconstitution of a queer body and subjectivity in art, and how this allows for not only a reclamation of identity, but also complicates and begins dismantling the present pharmacopornographic model of capitalism. I accomplish this through a close reading of Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie*, and other texts such as Jean-Luc Nancy's writings on community and José Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications*. Through the lenses provided by this theorists, I examine the radical implications contained in the work of Ron Athey, Emma Frankland, and Claude Cahun, who each place their queer bodies at the core of their artistic practices. Finally, I explore queer grief as a disidentifactory practice, and locate the importance of mourning in each of these artists' work. Ultimately, this thesis is a testament to the importance of queer art as a means to destabilize the seemingly all-encompassing pharmacopornographic system which seeks to reduce and demarcate subjects along legible binaries. By showcasing the ways in which liberatory and performative artistic practices allow for the reappropriation of a queer subjectivity, I demonstrate that the harmful narratives around gender, which have been normalized by the pharmaceutical and pornography industries, are dangerous fictions. And thus, this thesis is a small step in the formation of a queer world.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original, unpublished, intellectual product of the author, Daniel Halpern. No part of this work has been previously published.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the people who make me feel safe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge and am grateful for the support provided by Dr. Selena Couture as my supervisor for this project. I also acknowledge and thank the defense committee, Dr. Yelena Gluzman (External, Art and Design), Dr. Stefano Muneroni (Internal, Drama), Dr. Selena Couture (Supervisor, Drama), and the chair, Dr. Piet Defraeye (Drama).

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When I moved to Edmonton during the current Covid-19 pandemic, I knew it would be cold and I would be isolated. I left my vibrant queer community behind in Toronto and Halifax, and thus needed to start over during a time when new human contact felt irresponsible and impossible. With the initial goal of making queer friends to speak with online, I downloaded an app traditionally used for material bodies to exist together as bodies and as flesh. First, I am instructed to select my gender, and when I fail to fall into a demonstrably false binarist model, I must choose which normative category I would like for photos of me to appear in. I am given the reductive choice of appearing as either man or woman, for these are the only identities that can be legible in this technological sphere. We are assimilated, rendered invisible, as all queer bodies stumbled upon are merely coincidental. Finally, I am prompted to write a short bio, which in this context could be a short biography or perhaps a description of my biology, so I only write that "every time I bend my knees they crack (they/them)." In this introduction of myself, I describe multiple ways in which my body fails me. On one hand, I highlight the fragility of my soft Jewish body, as bad genetics have left me with the joints of a geriatric; and on the other hand, I make it clear that my body is not truly my own. Images of me are seen in relation to those who have selected that they ought to be presented alongside men, and the somatic fiction here is only

revealed as such when my photo is pressed. I offer up a resistance and my truth in simple brackets, (they/them) signifying something much more grand and complex. However, I have already been and always am reduced and demarcated by a gendered gaze, which places me firmly into an arbitrary category that is incongruous and incompatible with my identity.

As is the case with all bodies, my body is political in a myriad of ways. It is a political tool, it is a political statement, and it is constructed through politics as demonstrated by many philosophers and theorists, including Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and more recently, Paul Preciado. Foucault famously discusses a biopolitics wherein governing bodies have become increasingly concerned with the control and management of the population. Governance is an application of biopower, and thus my body and my life are simply things to be subjugated. My body is the subject of biopolitics and I am a subject in biopolitics. Although it has been decades since Foucault became an early casualty of the AIDS crisis, his insights on the control of political (individual) bodies in a population by political (governing) bodies continues to be relevant. If anything, Foucault's writings around biopolitics are more prescient than ever before, as Paul Preciado's auto-theoretical *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2008, trans. 2013) explores how we have moved past, or rather deeper into a biopolitical regime, as the gender and sexuality of human bodies have become inseparable from the political and capitalistic technologies that produce us. In an attempt to free himself of the gender forcibly inscribed on him and the commodification of his sexuality, Preciado begins to ritualistically and deliberately administer illegally obtained testosterone prior to his identifying as transgender. Preciado pairs his description of bodily transformations with theoretical and historical analyses of the capitalist technologies that not only produce gender and sexuality, but impose these reductions onto all bodies. Thus, Preciado's project is not only a

continuation of Foucault's writings on the hegemonic control over the body of a population, but also an extension of Judith Butler's treatment of a performatively created gender. Preciado refuses passivity in the face of his gendered and sexual construction, so he takes up performative acts to reconstitute his identity in a way that is not legible by the pharmacoporno-capitalism that he identifies. Ultimately, he advocates for a widespread use of this practice of gender hacking, wherein many bodies freeing themselves of capitalism's gendered and sexual inscriptions resists the commodification of their "*potentia gaudendi*, or 'orgasmic force,' the (real or virtual) strength of a body's (total) excitation."[1] The orgasmic force, according to Preciado, is the main concern of our contemporary capitalist model, as "the pharmacopornographic industry is striving for the exponential control and production of your desiring body."[2] While Butler discusses the performative form of gender in terms of normalized social codes, Preciado reveals the performative effect of technological and capitalist factors in the construction of a subjectivity, since in the current "pharamacopornographic regime, gender is constructed in industrial networks of biopolitical materialization" with the objective of producing "a living political prosthesis: a body that is compliant enough to put its *potentia gaudendi* […] at the service of the production of capital."[3] In other words, many elements of today's economy are upheld by the body's capacity for pleasure, a desire to fuck and be fucked. Capitalist technologies produce and normalize a binarist notion of gender and sex because it is easier to control and to market to. The app I downloaded when I first moved to Edmonton relies on and formalizes the biopolitical fiction of there being only two genders to earn capital, just as Pfizer relies on and formalizes false notions of masculinity (or the lack thereof) to peddle Viagra.

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[1] Paul Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. Bruce Benderson (New York: Feminist Press, 2013), 41.
[2] Ibid, 278.
[3] Ibid, 118-119.

While this thesis is concerned with a theatre of sorts, I am more so interested in exploring a quotidian stage here, as well as the various daily performances that queer subjects engage in as a means to survive the demarcating and harmful gaze of a pharmacopornographic regime. Thus, when I speak of performances of gender, I am not supporting the naïve and reductive claim that the gender identity of a subject is a choice, but rather I am exploring the processes of normalization that occur which inscribe gender onto unwilling bodies, as Judith Butler notoriously explores. Butler's notion of a performative gender emerges from J. L. Austen's conception of a performative utterance or speech act, wherein a tangible change occurs in material reality when certain things are spoken. There are guidelines for an utterance to have a "performative force […], it must 1) be uttered by the person designated to do so in an appropriate context; 2) adhere to certain conventions; and 3) take the intention(s) of the utterer into account."[4] I can only assume that the doctor who delivered me declared "it's a boy," and thus with a simple statement my infantile potential to be anything was circumvented. The claim "it's a boy" certainly did not make me so. I am nonbinary, and I always have been. However, the utterance did begin the processes of my socialization and my upbringing as a young man, wherein I had to swallow all the norms of boys. I studied for my Bar Mitzvah to become a man in the eyes of God, and I "played" hockey until the coach spoke to my father about my insistence to only make snow angels in center ice. I have my own language now, my own capacity for speech acts, and now no one else is "designated" to speak to the facts of my own existence but me. The statement that I am nonbinary is filled with a performative force, not only because the irrefutable claim is a revolt against a colonial and heteropatriarchal model of gender, but because I performatively change language and its definitions. When I say I am nonbinary, I demand that

[4] Sarah Salih, "On Judith Butler and Performativity," in *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life: A Reader*, ed. Karen Lovaas and Mercilee M. Jenkins, (California: SAGE, 2006), 55-67.

the term "nonbinary" includes the fact of my masculine body within it. Through language I carve out a home for myself inside of language, a place where all my fellow queers can live as well. This is a radical neighborhood, and it only takes a declarative performative force to establish your queer subjectivity here. In our queer tongues and language, we can find safety, as Preciado notes that "speaking implies not simply resisting the violence of the hegemonic performative, but above all imagining dissident theaters where the production of a different performative force can be possible."[5] I concretize my identity in the performative, beginning to free it from the performative force others have applied to me. Ultimately, the most divine speech act is not God speaking light into existence, it is God's refusal to be named by Moses, and thus demarcated. I am who I am.

While there has been a tremendous amount of scholarship around the construction of gender and the body in our contemporary moment, there has been less writing on the possibility of reconstruction. Preciado describes his own transformations and discusses some of the implications should a widespread gender hacking occur, and other transgender theorists, such as Jack Halberstam, similarly imagine queer futures where the harmful and normative narratives around gender have been destabilized. However, little exists about the ways in which this potential exists in the present and how these performative reconstitutions of queer bodies have already begun to upend the suffocating grasp that a binarist paradigm has on us. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which the performative undoing of the heteropatriarchal narratives around the body is a massive act of resistance which ripples throughout other queer bodies and dismantles the current pharmacopornographic regime's claims of dominance. This thesis will examine queer artists who performatively take up and recreate their own bodies,

[5] Paul Preciado, *An Apartment on Uranus: Chronicles of the Crossing*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2019), 90.

which in turn allows for the reconstitution of an identity which falls outside of the purview of the pharmacopornographic regime. Primarily, I will focus on Ron Athey, Claude Cahun, Emma Frankland, as well as Paul Preciado himself since his theory is undeniably entwined with the aesthetic practice of his writing. In a sense, each of these artists are deeply embedded within biopolitical crises: Ron Athey is a still living martyr of the AIDS crisis, Claude Cahun (1894-1954) is a proto-nonbinary, Jewish monster of the second world war, and Emma Frankland and Paul Preciado create during the present crisis of pharmacopornographic domination. As stated, I will make use of the philosophies put forth by Preciado, Foucault, and Butler, but I will also apply the writing of the recently deceased Jean-Luc Nancy (1940-2021) and the theory of disidentification as put forth by José Estaban Muñoz (1967-2013). I will engage specifically with Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009) as opposed to other works which relate more directly to gender because of its discussion of a precarity underlying life, and precisely because of its treatment of those who are performatively framed as not being worthy of grief.

There has been a significant amount of writing around art which takes up the body, such as: Petra Kuppers' *The Scar of Visibility* (2007), which discusses the role of surgery and its imagery in contemporary art; Amelia Jones' *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (1998), an exploration of body art from the 1960s and 70s; Benjamin Shepard's *Queer Political Performance and Protest* (2008), an examination of how queer ideas around play have informed social movements; and Paula Serafini's *Performance Action: The Politics of Art Activism* (2018), which discusses how art-based activism departs from more conventional forms to name a few. However, my research will depart significantly from these as I am not discussing how these artists merely transgress political boundaries, but how they subvert and supplant the

pharmacopornographic regime. My examination of the artistic practices and theories will involve close reading through a precise and personal biopolitical lens to explore the specific political conditions and treatments of the body which necessitated acts of resistance in the first place. Moreover, I will not be looking at art as simply an aesthetic practice, but as a radical performative practice which leaves the artist's body and the discourse around it changed. Ultimately, my goal is to display how the body can be liberated through performative force in the name of resisting a pharmacopornographic capitalism that seeks to control life in both a macro sense and through an endocrinological and molecular commodification. My aim is to demonstrate that the performative recreation of subjectivity, identity, and the body can be among the most accessible and effective means of queer revolution, as demonstrated through analysis of performative acts, Nancean relationality, as well as disidentifactory practices. My research will then look at examples in artistic practices where the mutable body is performatively reconstituted against the dominant forces and ideology that seek to deny or commodify gender queer existence. I will explore how taking up the same performative rituals that created a false binarist view of gender can be used to begin the deconstruction of the system that upholds it and allows us to reclaim our bodies.

This first chapter serves as an introduction to not only my queer body, but also as an invitation to a discursive home. It is my hope that struggling transgender and gender nonconforming people grab hold of this performative force and declare with pride the fact of their identity. I promise that that the word will make space for you. Moreover, this introductory chapter has discussed some of the current scholarship around a body in our heavily medicalized and mediatized era, and some of the exponentially growing scholarship around the indisputable and beautiful fact of a queer body, which does not want to diminish itself for the convenience of

a biopolitical regime. I have discussed the personal importance of performative force, which has given me security in my nonbinary identity, but I want to make clear that this force can be taken up for the benefit of not just the individual and their subjectivity, but for queer community at large. Artistic projects exist wherein through a performative undertaking, the queer body—in performance and in actuality— resists the pharmacopornographic model of capitalism's commodification and co-option of its gender and sexuality. Thus, this thesis will explore the performative reconstitution of the body and subjectivity of queer artists, which allows them to reclaim their identities while complicating and dismantling the present biopolitical and pharmacopornographic system's structure.

The second chapter will discuss the specific performative and bodily practices of certain creatives, namely Athey, Cahun, Frankland, and Preciado, and how these artistic endeavors serve to combat a biopolitical threat to their queer subjectivities. As a reductive and binarist view of gender has been performatively normalized through the repetition of certain every day codes and significations—in other words "the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation,"[6] I examine the new performative rituals for the queer body in art and during crisis. First, I elaborate more on Preciado's conception of the contemporary pharmacopornographic era, and the precise ways in which it carries danger for queer bodies, and then I explore Preciado's resistance. Preciado's ritualistic reconfiguring of his gender into something illegible is both performative and performance, and as such I will investigate the performative intervention in a way that focuses on the role of the body. I explore Ron Athey's sadomasochistic performances, which often "challenge the purported sanctity of the flesh, and specifically those meanings and orthodox values that claim sovereign command of the body through religious, moral and other

[6] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1998): 526.

disciplinary logics."[7] Much of Athey's work seeks to transform the trauma he has experienced, be it from his Pentecostal upbringing, addiction, or from the AIDS crisis, as he recontextualizes the pain through performative rituals. I examine Claude Cahun's reframing of their queer, Jewish body through photography as a means to resist the Nazi regime,[8] and explore the way in which they display their body as monstrous. Emma Frankland, a transgender theatre artist, similarly portrays herself as a monster on the contemporary stage, and in doing so, she seeks to highlight the indisputable fact of her existence. This chapter demonstrates how these performative rituals and bodily practices manifest as acts of resistance.

The third chapter examines the elements of community at play within these performative practices of reforming queer subjectivities. On one hand, I will explore the necessity of queer communities for queer subjectivity to become legible in relation to other queer bodies. And on the other hand, I will discuss the ways in which the performative reconstruction of an identity and queer body provides ground for further queer resistance. The chapter begins by grappling with the precise meaning of community, as this word has become increasingly fraught, and is in danger of losing definition. Fundamentally, this chapter is an exploration of the ways in which queer bodies find safety and definition in each other. Ultimately then, I explore the benefits and pitfalls of community during the pharmacopornographic regime, as these queer communities both offer protection, but may also substantiate the pharmacopornographic false claims to legitimacy. I then contrast Athey's work, which involves the bloody and painful inscription of

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[7] Dominic Johnson, "Introduction: Toward a Moral and Just Psychopathology," in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 26.

[8] Earlier I referred to Claude Cahun as a proto-nonbinary figure, as such I will refer to Claude Cahun with they/them pronouns. There is some discomfort in this, as Claude Cahun never identified as such, but this is perhaps a consequence of the limitation of language at the time. For a more in-depth questioning of which pronouns to use for the French artist, please see Jill Richards' "Claude Cahun's Pronouns."

queer community onto the flesh and the creation of a new site of communal mourning, with the practice of Frankland, insofar as her work points to the queer body moving out of the shadows.

The fourth chapter explores how the queer artist who has reshaped themselves through performative acts navigates the world, and in doing so, further dismantles and disrupts a pharmacopornographic rule for the creation of potential queer worlds. Primarily, this section will examine the aforementioned artists in relation to Muñoz's notion of disidentification. This section is a testament to how the bodies which reclaim their identities from a pharmacopornographic system survive by using the materials provided to them by a majoritarian sphere. Crucially, this chapter also examines how grief is often disidentified with by queer subjects, and will thus situate the work produced by the various artists I examine as expressions of mourning. Fundamentally, this chapter also contextualizes the entirety of this thesis and my own queer subjectivity as products of grief.

My final chapter serves as a conclusion wherein I briefly summarize some of the most pertinent discoveries from this thesis, discuss some of the inevitable gaps given the enormity of queer and trans history and resistances, and speak to the next steps of my practice. Further, I will provide other examples of queer artists worth discussing in the context of the dismantling of the pharmacopornographic regime, as well as discuss some of the other theoreticians I had initially intended on discussing in this thesis. Finally, my conclusion will allow for a momentary breath, and provide an opportunity to take in the beautiful things that the world has to offer.

I elect to structure my thesis along thematic lines, as opposed to dedicating each chapter to a different artist and applying the work of various theoreticians to their practices of queer resistance. While I am grateful for the art produced by the subjects I am investigating, I am primarily interested in the theories which have provided tools and guidance on how to become

disentangled with the violence of the pharmacopornographic system. There are countless artists whose work is emblematic of a struggle against this paradigm of demarcation; however, I do not want to suggest that my decision to focus on Athey, Cahun, and Frankland is arbitrary. I selected these three artists for this thesis precisely because they each offer up a unique model of resistance in different—but overlapping—iterations of pharmacopornographic control and violence. Claude Cahun is most well-known for their work produced during the Shoah, with the Nazi threat being indicative of the most frightful form of a desire for immanence. Ron Athey's most prolific artworks are crafted in the face of the AIDS crisis, which is in many ways a pharmacopornographic disease, insofar as it was framed as being a queer sickness. And finally, Emma Frankland's work exists as a direct response to her reading of Preciado's *Testo Junkie*, and thus she actively creates her art as a reaction to the present moment, where the reach and dominance of a pharmacopornographic model has never been more clear or widespread.

Two: Performative Interventions of the Flesh

The mountains around my eyes set on fire
before I could even swallow my own spit
I was born a boy with many opinions
And now I'm a girl who doesn't really care
about anything
This beautiful thing happens every day
It's called the sun
It's called my blood
And it's the only thing making us want to be
alive

Florist, "Thank You"

Initially, I was going to start this chapter by writing that I must begin with the body, as all queer resistances begin in or on skin. However, that suggests that at some point my writing will extend past the body. It suggests that one day queer revolution will move past the body. This is not the case. To be queer is to be body. With that, I want to dispel the notion that queer people are born into the wrong body. After all, how can something with the capacity for so much tenderness be wrong? It is not the body that is wrong, rather the performatives that surround it that lead to so much discomfort and unease. Within a medical paradigm alone, performative forces extend much further than the declaration of an arbitrary gender at birth, as later endeavors to shape the body into a more affirming vessel are mitigated through performative gatekeeping. To receive the hormones and operations that some trans and gender queer people seek for their form to align more with their identity, they first must submit to a diagnosis. They must first be framed as unwell, diagnosed as mentally ill, so that they may receive "treatment." The queer who seeks to transform their body through its very endocrinological functions must accept the label of disordered so that they may achieve a body that does not elicit dysphoria. To receive your ideal body, you must brand it with a label of deviance. Thus, queers "experience, directly with our

bodies, the violence and domination of this world. […] We've had our bodies and desires stolen from us, mutilated, and sold back to us as a model of living we can never embody."[9] The framing of my body as a failing is a betrayal I do not think myself capable of.[10] Instead, I look for performative interventions and rituals on the body that circumvent our current paradigm which is so insistent on the regulation and categorization of the body. Within this chapter, I explore how these rituals are an effective first step in the disruption and dismantling of the pharmacopornographic hold on our queer subjectivities.

Before I begin, it is necessary to address an obvious tension in my writing, as I am speaking of and to the queer subject, which in and of itself seems like a performative categorization of an unwilling body. However, I want to make it clear that I am not discussing the categories included in the LGBTQ+ acronym and all its variations, but instead I am looking at a model which places the Q at the forefront, both sheltering us and allowing us to be weapons. I take inspiration here from the Mary Nardini Gang, an anarchist collective, who declare in "Toward the Queerest Insurrection" that:

> [Queer] is the qualitative position of opposition to presentations of stability — an identity that problematizes the manageable limits of identity. Queer is a territory of tension, defined against the dominant narrative of white-hetero-monogamous-patriarchy, but also by an affinity with all who are marginalized, otherized and oppressed. Queer is the abnormal, the strange, the dangerous. […] Queer is the cohesion of everything in conflict with the heterosexual capitalist world.[11]

Thus, when I discuss the queer subject, I am discussing the subaltern, the miscreant, those who pharmacopornographic regimes seeks to erase or absorb. For both the Mary Nardini Gang and

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[9] Mary Nardini Gang, "Toward the Queerest Insurrection," in *Queer Ultra Violence: Bash Back! Anthology*, ed. Fray Baroque & Tegan Eanelli (San Francisco: Ardent Press, 2011), 238.

[10] I would like to make it clear that this is a personal choice, and is not meant in any way to slight people who choose to medically transition. All trans and gender non-conforming people are valid in their identity, regardless of what we do with our bodies, and we must act and behave with solidarity.

[11] Ibid, 235-236.

Paul Preciado, there is salvation in the embracing of our desires and identities in a way that is illegible to the current paradigm.

In *Testo Junkie*, Paul Preciado provides tremendous insight to the pharmacopornographic regime that we have found ourselves in, and he allows a glimpse into his particular means of reclaiming his body from it. While the biopolitical focus on the life of the individual was primarily concerned with the extension of a lifespan or the management of the population in a Foucauldian sense, Preciado examines how biopower became the primary interest of capitalist forces, leading to the "real stake of capitalism today [being] the pharmacopornographic control of subjectivity."[12] The aim of capitalism is now no longer to peddle commodities that we may desire, but is instead the formation of us as subjects so that we have no choice but to consume in a way that best serves the market. Pharmacopornographic capitalism exerts control over our subjectivities so that our identities are formed around what can be marketed towards, inundating us from birth with performative norms that we must adhere to. It is easier to market goods to two genders when those genders believe they are the be all and end all. It is the extra few dollars it costs to buy pink razor blades. Pharmacopornographic capitalism makes it difficult to distinguish our subjectivity from our desire, as it shapes us into hungry individuals who will never be satisfied.

The means through which subjectivity is constructed is two-fold, occurring from the in-tandem machinations of both the pharmaceutical and pornography industries. Both industries adopt "models for body control [which] are microprosthetic,"[13] as they co-opt the interminable facts of bodily reality, making natural biochemical cycles and biological inclinations into an

[12] *Testo Junkie*, 39.
[13] Ibid, 78.

opportunity for profit. Further, these industries have performatively framed their own interventions as natural, which has led to the perception of bodily domination as natural too. For example:

> [H]ormones produce their systemic effects on hunger, sleep, sexual arousal, aggressiveness, and the social decoding of our femininity and masculinity. […] These new soft technologies […] adopt the form of the body they control and become part of it until they are inseparable and indistinguishable from it, ending up as techno-soma-subjectivities.[14]

This claim is more clearly applicable for the pharmaceutical industry than it is for the pornographic one, but the interplay between the two is quite visible if you simply picture the molecular and carnal impacts of Viagra. Moreover, film scholar, Linda Williams, deems pornography a "body genre" of film, where the spectator is almost embodied by the image as "the success of these [pornographic films] is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen."[15] However, as pornography has become more widespread, perhaps even unavoidable, porn has become "less about the encounter of bodies and more about the physical encounter with an eroticized technological apparatus."[16] As stated in my first chapter, the pharmacopornographic regime seeks to control the body in its capacity for desire, but also with regards for how the body desires. Pornography sets the standard for how and who we desire, as it "tells the *performative* truth about sexuality. It is not the degree zero of representation. Rather, it reveals that sexuality *is always performance*, the public practice of a regulated repetition, a staging as well as an involuntary mechanism of connection to the global circuit of excitation-frustration-excitation."[17] Ultimately, porn produces us as it produces the

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[14] Ibid, 78-79.
[15] Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 4.
[16] Linda Williams, "Porn Studies: Proliferating Pornographies On/Scene: An Introduction" in *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.
[17] *Testo Junkie*, 270-271.

signification of our desire, controlling when, how, and with whom we may be aroused, normalizing certain desires which are framed along a binary and marking others as perverse and deviant.

While it may be true that "[t]he market of chemical and audiovisual products are supplementing erections to the point of supplanting them,"[18] Viagra and other products that aid with penial virility, and in doing so construct a normative idea of masculinity, are only one example of technologies that the pharmaceutical industry uses to exert control over and create our subjectivity. The birth control pill is another microtechnology that solidifies reductive and normative fictions around the body, as it was initially rejected by the FDA for throwing "doubt on the femininity of American women by suppressing their periods altogether."[19] The pill only became accepted once it could "reproduce the rhythms of a natural menstrual cycle, inducing bleeding that created the illusion of a natural cycle's taking place,"[20] which effectively applies Butlerian notions of gender performatives and the "linguistic 'performative force' to *living mimicry*, the technical imitation of the very materiality of the living being."[21] Thus, the pharmaceutical industry cements certain bodily functions as entry points for normative gender categories, even if those bodies coded as such are unable to adhere to those standards naturally. Masculinity equals the capability to get a rock hard erection and fuck indiscriminately and at all times. Femininity equals a monthly bloodshed and the capacity to be pregnant, pumping out baby (future subject in the pharmacopornographic model) after baby. This latter presupposition of getting "knocked up" as what constitutes femininity is a rhetoric that is often used by trans-

[18] Ibid, 301.
[19] Ibid, 190.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, 191.

exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) and other transphobes. It is bio-essentialist and harmful, especially considering that many cisgendered women are themselves unable to conceive for a myriad of potential reasons. Thus, they must turn to the pharmaceutical industry to help with this perceived "lack" created by the same industry. Ultimately then, in the limp cock and in the infertile womb, a present model of cisgender identity can be found, "without knowing which comes first: our depression or Prozac, Viagra or an erection, testosterone or masculinity, the Pill or maternity, tritherapy or AIDS. This performative feedback is one of the mechanisms of the pharmacopornographic regime."[22] Within the pharmacopornographic regime, gender is not found in what the body is capable of achieving, but in its "failures" and in what may be manipulated. Again, transgender and gender nonconforming people have not been born in the wrong body. Everyone lives in a system that flourishes on the knowledge that it itself created, all bodies are failing.

It is in this context of a pharmacopornographic regime and with the death of a loved one that Preciado's project begins. Weaving together his dissection of the pharmacopornographic regime with personal narratives, Preciado's *Testo Junkie* uses "activism as a research methodology."[23] While *Testo Junkie* contains an inherent seditious spirit, it is not a grand hyper-visible stand against the current paradigm, since for Preciado, "revolution does not begin with a march in the sun, but with a hiatus, a pause, a tiny shift a deviation in the game of improvisations and appearances."[24] Preciado's revolution is molecular, experimenting with illegally obtained testosterone supplements so that he may free himself from the pharmacopornographic regime

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[22] Ibid, 34-35.

[23] Ricky Tucker, "Pharmacoporngraphy: An Interview with [Paul] Preciado," *The Paris Review*, December 4, 2013, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2013/12/04/pharmacopornography-an-interview-with-beatriz-preciado/. As the interview referenced here uses Preciado's dead name in the title, I have replaced it out of respect with Paul in square brackets.

[24] *Uranus*, 155.

and reclaim his identity. Preciado's revolution is performative. Like other microprosthetics, testosterone involves a certain definition and presupposition of identity, and Preciado describes the information pamphlet contained in his Testogel as a "manual for microfascism."[25] Preciado transcribes the content of the packet, with the language used by the manufacturer suggesting a certain requisite heterosexuality and purporting a certain gendered essentialism. For example, the Testogel pack describes testosterone as "a naturally secreted male hormone," includes information to "guarantee the safety of one's female partner," and perhaps most egregiously includes a section on "[u]se by athletes and women," suggesting that these are mutually exclusive categories.[26] It is through these performative prohibitions on a natural product that an anachronistic idea of masculinity is again created. A syllogism for the pharmacopornographic mindset: Testosterone is masculinity. Men take testosterone because they do not produce enough of it independently. Therefore, men are not masculine. However, Preciado writes that (at least at the time of writing *Testo Junkie*) he aligns with a group of "'gender hackers' […] *copyleft* users who consider sex hormones free and open biocodes, whose use shouldn't be regulated by the state or commandeered by pharmaceutical companies."[27] Preciado's use of testosterone must be outside the purview of any medical professional, so that he may create his own subjectivity without the pharmacopornographic regime's awareness. Therein lies Preciado's performative intervention, as he curates his endocrinological play to disrupt any external control over his body and identity.

For Preciado, his administration of Testogel serves as an extremely intimate performance, wherein the hormone performatively and gradually acts in and upon the body. I do not want to be

[25] *Testo Junkie*, 60.
[26] Ibid, 58, 59, & 64.
[27] Ibid, 55.

misunderstood when I say that Preciado's act is both performance and performative, and not simply one or the other. The notion of gender as performative famously comes from Butler's idea that "gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time,"[28] as certain arbitrary signifiers of a gender are normalized in the repetition. Preciado's daily "ritual of testosterone administration" becomes itself a performative act,[29] for with each dose of Testogel, Preciado gradually displays more markers conventionally associated with "man" in a binary system. Since Preciado engages in this daily practice without the pharmacopornographic regime being aware, he is not recognized as a man, but he allows the identity previously forced on him to fall away, and thus Preciado finds liberation in a liminal position which may not be recognized by any domineering capitalist force. Instead of Preciado's identity becoming that of "man," Preciado becomes pure potentiality that cannot be categorized, and he "lay[s] claim to the irreducible plurality of [his] living body, not to [his] body as 'bare life,' but to the very materiality of [his] body as political site for agency and resistance."[30] On the other hand, there is a series of performances involved in Preciado's transitory practice, as he curates the ritual with an artistic eye. *Testo Junkie* begins with a description of Preciado's careful shaving of his scalp, and his repurposing of the hair into a moustache. The language Preciado uses is itself "almost a performance. Definitely, the writing that [he] do[es] has a performative dimension."[31] Following the manifestation of facial hair, Preciado applies the Testogel, and then puts on a harness which has two distinct dildos strapped to it. Preciado then makes specific mention of the fact that he is filming this process, and not simply committing it to writing, methodical about what exists in the

[28] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.
[29] *Testo Junkie*, 20.
[30] Ibid, 250.
[31] Tucker.

camera's frame. Next, he contorts his body so that he is able to "slide the dildos into the openings at the lower part of [his] body,"[32] creating an independent and subversive pornographic film of autonomous desire outside the purview of the pharmacopornographic regime. Preciado recognizes that there is something deeply intimate in his self-penetration by both the testosterone and the double phallus, and notes that his daily ritual may be "a secret and private one if each of these administrations weren't being filmed and sent anonymously to an Internet page on which hundreds of transgender, mutating bodies all over the planet are exchanging techniques and know-how."[33] Preciado is by no means not the only gender dissident who is finding liberation in performative endocrinological play. While discussing the performative utterance, which I assert can exist in all modes of language and not just speech, Preciado notes that "[f]or the subaltern, speaking implies not simply resisting the violence of the hegemonic performative, but above all imagining dissident theaters where the production of a different performative force can be possible."[34] Preciado's method of freeing his subjectivity from the pharmacopornographic regime is effective, as his performative actions reconstitute his body, while the elements of performance at play allow for this form to be visible as a body that exists outside the capitalist model's totalizing grasp. Preciado's project succeeds because it is compatible with his own identity and ideologies, but it is not the only performative intervention that can operate against a cisgender and heterosexual paradigm.

Preciado imagines through his *Countersexual Manifesto* a sort of genderless world, where as part of "the framework of the countersexual contract, bodies recognize themselves and others not as men or women but as living bodies. They recognize in themselves the possibility of

[32] *Testo Junkie*, 19.
[33] Ibid, 21.
[34] *Uranus*, 90.

gaining access to every signifying practice as well as every position of enunciation, as individuals that history has established as masculine, feminine, trans, intersex, or perverse."[35] Within a countersexual society, subjects work towards an illegibility of biological sex, rendering any sort of predetermination or categorization of someone's gender and sexuality as an impossibility. Within a countersexual framework, it is not just gender that exists as a biopolitical phenomenon, but genitals themselves are seen as a biopolitical technology, which is an apparent truth upon consideration of the fact that "the medical normalization of techniques of sex reassignment, genital mutilation of intersex babies, and surgical reconstruction of gender, are nothing other than desperate (and violent) measures to reinforce a shattered epistemology."[36] Such acts of cruelty are enacted onto the innocent, some of whom are too young to speak, so that the illusion of a binary that has always been false may be upheld. While much of *Testo Junkie* is dedicated to the queer subjectivity, it is in the *Countersexual Manifesto* that materiality is at the forefront. As such, Preciado identifies certain practices which may be considered countersexual, including the artistry of Ron Athey. If Preciado's project is about a refusal to "conform to the criteria established by the *DMS-IV* [sic], the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, […] in which, beginning in 1980, transsexuality was designated as a mental illness, just like exhibitionism, fetishism, frotteurism, masochism, sadism,"[37] perhaps then Athey's work can be considered a denial that those who engage in kink sexual practices are themselves mentally unwell. Athey's work celebrates and stages queer sexual practices that often remain hidden with the pharmacopornographic regime that portrays them as shameful acts. Preciado recounts a performance by Athey where there is a "very precise genital torture that consists of a

[35] Paul Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, trans. Kevin Gerry Dunn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 20.
[36] *Testo Junkie*, 103.
[37] Ibid, *257.*

nontoxic liquid (saline solution) injection has deformed his penis and his testicles. His genitals, jutting out and swinging between his legs, look more like a kind of external uterus than male genitalia. His penis is bloated but unerect."[38] While Preciado correctly identifies a certain revolutionary spirit to his work, the extent of Ron Athey's performative intervention is much greater than Preciado writes about.

Like Preciado, Athey's performative intervention consists of a series of rituals, but where Preciado uses his body to construct a subjectivity outside the pharmacopornographic context, Athey reenacts on-stage similar experiences and traumas to the ones he has already faced. Athey does not look for performatives outside the pharmacopornographic model, he instead appropriates the performatives of a straight and devoutly Christian America. Athey queers the harm he has already experienced, allowing the pain to reach his skin again, but in the form of performative sadomasochistic rituals. Ritual has always been central in Athey's life, as it played an important part in Athey's strange and troubled childhood:

> Raised in an extremely dysfunctional Pentecostal household, the young 'Ronnie Lee' was sainted as young prophet messiah, who proselytized in tongues, and whose tears were coveted by the entire congregation. The adoration bestowed upon him in the revival tent did little to alleviate the daily nightmares heaped upon him as unwitting victim of his mother's schizophrenia, his aunt's hyper-sexualized insanity, and his grandmother's channelling of other-worldly spectres.[39]

Athey's relationship with the three women who raised him is most clearly explored in his largely autobiographical *Joyce*, named for Athey's mother. The play premiered in 2002, and features three performers each representing one of the matriarchal figures, with an additional fourth actor portraying a young Ron Athey appearing in projection. Throughout the play, the performers

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[38] *Countersexual Manifesto*, 44.

[39] Lydia Lunch, "*Joyce*: The Violent Disbelief of Ron Athey" in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 195.

repeat certain tasks compulsively, such as the young Athey self-mutilating and "his grandmother, Annie Lou, summoning the ectoplasmic angels whose beseeching shrill is exorcized in a series of automatic writing and action paintings."[40] The actions in the piece become increasingly frenzied as *Joyce* continues, eventually culminating with Joyce, played by Athey himself, breaking through the confines of the room she is trapped in on-stage. Athey is suspended, still in pain, but free, and there is a "compassionate epiphany: we all need to break free from the shackles placed upon the individual by society, family, religion and gender."[41] Athey's performance drapes a queer sexuality over his childhood trauma, and a "bodily archiving process takes place literally before an audience and literally as a re-enacting."[42] Athey allows the pain to return to him, but it is on his own terms, manifest into queer desire. At the core of *Joyce* is a notion that "[t]he cycle of abuse changes course only once you have decided to own your self-flagellation, not simply as revenge or repetition of the crimes committed against you, but in celebration as ritual to all that has been wilfully [sic] overcome."[43] Consistently throughout his work, Athey transforms abuse from both his family and a government within the pharmacopornographic system into not only a source of strength, but a source of joy and revelry. Athey's message is a threat to the paradigm and a reassurance to the subaltern, no matter the harm done to us, we queers will survive and we will smile.

Athey's message is especially prescient considering the period in which he wholly embraced his sadomasochistic performances and gained notoriety, as his art centres his HIV+ body in pain during the height of the AIDS crisis. The treatment of queer people during the

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[40] Ibid, 197.
[41] Ibid.
[42] André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2010): 32.
[43] Lunch, 194.

AIDS crisis is abhorrent, and Preciado notes that the work done by the infamous AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) ought to be considered itself "'anti-pharmacopornographic activism': fighting AIDS became fighting the biopolitical and cultural apparatuses of the production of the AIDS syndrome—which include biomedical models, advertising campaigns, governmental and nongovernmental health organizations."[44] The queer struggle against AIDS is not only a struggle against sickness and grief, but also a struggle against misinformation, fatal apathy, and a struggle for recognition. Despite the widespread suffering, the AIDS crisis was largely met with inaction which Leo Bersani chronicles in his article, "Is the Rectum a Grave" (arguably one of the first works of queer theory), as he writes:

> At the highest levels of officialdom, there have been the criminal delays in funding research and treatment, the obsession with testing instead of curing, the singularly unqualified members of Reagan's (belatedly constituted) AIDS commission, and the general tendency to think of AIDS as an epidemic of the future rather than a catastrophe of the present. […] Television and the press continue to confuse AIDS with the HIV virus, to speak of AIDS as if it were a venereal disease, and consequently to suggest that one catches it by being promiscuous.[45]

As victims were often queer, drug users, or both, the narratives around the epidemic placed the blame on them. The disease was seen as intensely moralistic, possessing its own agency, and public discussion around it seemed to almost revere the sickness as a divine punishment for the subaltern. The sick were performatively framed by the pharmacopornographic regime as if they were deserving of the pain, and thus a genocide occurred out of inaction. In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, Butler discusses these discursive frames of power, and notes that it "does not simply exhibit reality, but actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively

[44] *Testo Junkie*, 337.
[45] Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave," *October* 43 (1987): 198-199.

producing and enforcing what will count as reality."[46] Those who died of HIV/AIDS were simply seen as *Lebensunwertes Leben*, life unworthy of life, for "[w]hen populations become implicitly framed as targets for destruction within ordinary discourse, then the frame solicits our complicity with this practice of the visual and discursive normalization of war."[47] And there is certainly a rhetoric of AIDS as a sort of conflict, as Catherine Gund writes "[she] ha[s] long known that the AIDS crisis is a war and people are coming home in body bags."[48] Even in cases where children or heterosexuals contract the sickness, the blame was placed on queers as if they are the source, as they came to be seen as a scourge that embodies the sickness themselves. These operational frames of power effectively convince the subject in pharmacopornographic regime that all life is not equal—that not everyone is worthy of grief. Athey's performative intervention is radical because it breaks this frame, he makes people watch his suffering HIV+ body, he elicits emotion, and he demands a response.

As Athey's work involves a reiteration and reclamation of his trauma, his performative intervention denies the narratives placed on queer bodies during the AIDS crisis and instills something holy in their legacy. As the pharmacopornographic frame portrays queer bodies as not grievable, they are dehumanized since "[w]ithout grievability, there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. Instead, 'there is a life that will never have been lived,' sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost."[49] Athey denies this as a permissible fate for his fellow queers, as his body in pain becomes the testimony for the countless lost. In performance, Athey's suffering form becomes representative of all others who

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[46] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2016), xiii.
[47] Ibid, xvii.
[48] Catherine Gund, "'There are Many Ways to Say Hallelujah!'" in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 61.
[49] Ibid, 15.

have suffered because of HIV/AIDS, and he becomes a gathering place. During a period of time where there are too many people to mourn, Athey stands in for everyone who has been lost, as "Athey's body presents and discloses itself as a delicate force of carriage. It is the vessel and the scene of uncertain transports: of joy and pain, most evidently, but also the transit of other bodies that are re-borne and transformed through iteration."[50] His body is a church where people come together to grieve an innumerable loss, an opportunity which the pharmacopornographic paradigm has otherwise denied, as "the family identity produced on American television is much more likely to include your dog than your homosexual brother or sister."[51] There is an undeniable religiosity present in Athey's work, for while he allows himself to be representative of the queer body suffering from HIV, he also takes up the iconography of Saint Sebastian, who, dashed with arrows, became an erotic queer symbol and protector against plague. However, Athey's martyrdom entails the martyrdom of other queers, since "[h]e remembers being drawn to depict his friends and lovers as 'living saints on earth [who were] being struck down,'"[52] thus that is what they become in his ritualistic and sadomasochistic performances. Athey does not settle for the victims of AIDS to be simply grieved and mourned, he transforms them into figures to be revered and worshipped, which incidentally is another stand against the religious groups that would see him and the queers condemned.

Not only does Athey's performance shift the narratives around queer bodies during the AIDS crisis, performatively transforming victims into religious figures, Athey's careful and painful control of his own HIV+ body also grants him power over the sickness itself. In 1994, Athey gained a level of infamy for his *4 Scenes of a Harsh Life*, as "the permeability of his body

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[50] Adrian Heathfield, "Illicit Transit" in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 220.
[51] Bersani, 203.
[52] Johnson "Introduction," 28.

in concert with his known HIV status made Athey into a scapegoat during the AIDS crisis, as journalists and politicians projected fantasies of contagion and threat onto his body, often inventing narratives about his performances that misrepresented the actual events."[53] Specifically, the vignette "The Human Printing Press," in *4 Scenes* led to a massive uproar, as it featured paper towel blotted with blood hanging over the audience. Athey became emblematic of all things perverse in culture for the right-wing, despite the fact that it was not his blood dangling, but Athey's frequent collaborator Darryl Carlton, who was HIV negative. However, despite the rampant misinformation around the performance, it still

> seemed to capture manifested AIDS as a thing to be manipulated and controlled, through a set of punitive actions available in the aesthetic realm. The bloody fabrics strung on clotheslines distilled the unmanageable potentialities of AIDS into a fetish; an object that could be articulated, punished, demeaned and controlled (albeit through fantasy).[54]

In Athey's performative intervention, he reduces sickness in a similar fashion to how queer subjectivities are often demarcated and forced into categories, and in doing so he demystifies it. He does not celebrate AIDS, but he celebrates the queer capacity to withstand pain and find joy in an identity based around an illness that was perceived as shameful. In a push to recognize a subject in pain, Athey forces an audience to look at his body and see him as a subject of his own creation:

> [T]he wound is in fact precisely a mode of signifying that makes the body of the other available as meaningful through identification. It makes pain readable as inscribed in and on the body. The spectacular nature of Athey's performances and photographs of his performative body productively exacerbate this point.[55]

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[53] Laura Westengard, "Monstrosity: Melancholia, Cannibalism, and HIV/AIDS" in *Gothic Queer Culture: Marginalized Communities and the Ghosts of Insidious Trauma* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 125.
[54] Dominic Johnson, "'Does a Bloody Towel Represent the Ideals of the American People?': Ron Athey and the Culture Wars" in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 80.
[55] Amelia Jones, "How Ron Athey Makes Me Feel: The Political Potential of Upsetting Art" in *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 177.

The affect which Athey sparks through his own wounding has the potential to lead to the radical phenomenon of empathy, as the audience recognizes the subject through the harm they have faced. In turn, the pharmacopornographic regime may be wounded by this kindness as well, since this scarification can be seen "as pushing us off the *straight* path. I think of queerness in relation to wounding: wounded, no longer straight, crooked, a wobbliness."[56] Athey's performative intervention then may be gruesome and bloody, but so is the threat queers often face. His blood is a kindness.

Another radical aspect of Athey's performative intervention is his framing of himself as a monstrous figure, showing pride in and celebrating the role of the other. However, this tactic is not unique to him. Emma Frankland is a contemporary theatre artist who is primarily based in the UK, but she has performed her work in Canada, across Europe, Indonesia, and throughout Brazil. She portrays herself as a monstrous figure in "Hearty," named for hormone replacement therapy (HRT), as a means to complicate certain narratives around the trans body. Moreover, aspects of Frankland's work are in direct response to and incorporate elements of *Testo Junkie*, with her "egg/box" directly quoting and engaging with Preciado's work. With Preciado's text as a guide, Frankland describes her desire for "*Hearty* to explore the idea of hormones as prosthetics, and how some trans people modify our bodies in radical, beautiful ways. [She] wanted to have wings […]. As a counter to the artificial wings, [she] also wore a long rat's tail […] that looked cumbersome and unnatural, a weight to be carried around."[57] The wings Frankland wears are meant to be a beautiful addition to the body, but ultimately they contain

[56] K. J. Cerankowski, "Praying for Pieces: A Practice in Building the Trans Body," *CrossCurrents* 68, no. 4 (2018): 518.
[57] Emma Frankland, *None of Us is Yet a Robot: Five Performances on Gender Identity and the Politics of Transition* (London: Oberon Books, 2019), 157.

more of a potential for threat or danger than the fleshy tail. The wings are built from knives, and serve almost as a threat to anyone who may approach Frankland's body without her consent. However, the wings, like the testosterone Preciado experiments with, possess their own agency, and thus the "wings asserted themselves during [Frankland's] run […]. The wings began to flap freely, shifting [Frankland's] weight as they moved around, […] the knives cut [her] back to ribbons."[58] Frankland insists on keeping the wings as a cornerstone of the piece for the remaining performances (albeit with some modifications and repairs), so that she may show "gender-hacking as a beautiful decision,"[59] but nevertheless her monstrous prosthetics bring her harm. However, I do not perceive the damage done by the wings as representative of the idea that the effects of transition only bring harm to the queer body, which is Frankland's concern as she sheds the wings for a single, particularly brutalizing performance. Rather, like K. J. Cerankowski, "I imagine a monstrous benediction as a particular blessing on the trans body made of violence or violently made—wounded, built of scar tissue, all the abject horror of what we see in the wounds and scars, a body built, a body becoming more and more beautiful."[60] This is not to suggest that trans or queer beauty is the result of pain or self-harm, as there are already way too many trans and gender queer people (particularly our adolescents) who experience such wounding. Instead I think about a performance I saw in Halifax where an artist who had recently had top surgery smiled at the audience and began removing each suture. This performer, both displaying and bleeding from the queerness of the body, allowed a fundamental self to be visible on stage. There is so much danger in Frankland's performative intervention, since "[i]f we can be recognized, we can be misrecognized. We can always be wounded. There is a violence in

[58] Ibid, 159.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Cerankowski, 517.

naming. There is a violence in seeing or not seeing the body for what it is. There is a violence in making and piecing together the body."[61] Frankland allows the potential pain and risk in the trans experience to be visible, and in the literal wounding, she performatively creates a metaphorical wound of past queer trauma. However, now that the wound exists, it can be treated. Frankland's performative interventions create the possibility of healing.

Frankland's desire for a queer healing is most apparent in her "Rituals for Change," which is concerned with the creation of Frankland's trans body. However, Frankland resists the idea that trans identity is only formed in the reconstruction of the body and the show is then "a rejection of an ever-increasing public fascination with trans lives that seemed always centered on a moment of transition change — in search of a single action."[62] None of the rituals within the play reflect a single moment that can be distilled into an instance of becoming transgender, because that notion is ridiculous. There is no before or after in identity, there is only a fluidity, and Frankland has always been a woman, even prior to any performative intervention. The rituals involved in the performance are then not the staging moments of a particular transformation, but instead celebrate the fact that all bodies are constantly changing and evolving as fluid and malleable things. The play is concerned with Frankland's affect, her relationship with her trans body as it evolves through performative and medical interventions, as she attempts to answer the question "how can [she] shake the trauma out? [Her] trauma, [her] community's trauma."[63] The simple answer is that she is incapable of this, but she still places the harm trans and gender nonconforming people face on the surface of her rituals and displays it. In doing so, she displays the intent behind her ritualistic performance, as she begins and ends the piece with the notion

[61] Ibid, 519.
[62] Frankland, 106.
[63] Ibid, 109.

that for queers, "[t]he radical act is to exist. The radical act is to be seen, to choose to allow others to see these radical bodies. To allow ourselves to heal is the radical act."[64] Frankland instructs us to unabashedly be ourselves and do so with pride, because that in itself is a threat to the pharmacopornographic regime. In Gayle Salamon's *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*, she makes reference to the newspaper headline "Transsexual Ousted from Shelter Shower for Sexual Orientation," but she notes that the headline grossly misrepresents the events as the woman "referred to in the headline was assaulted and dragged out of a public restroom not because of her sexual orientation but because of her gender presentation. There was no sexual activity in that restroom; the prohibited 'activity' was the presentation of her gender."[65] There is a dangerous conflation of gender and sexuality, and the woman only serves as a threat to the pharmacopornographic regime since her idle body is a reminder that normative heterosexuality and cisgender identity has not always existed and is not the only subjectivity. Frankland recounts being asked to present at an event for International Women's Day as a response to them also featuring a well-known TERF, and thus she used her time to not engage in debate, since "there is *no debate* to be had, we should not be debating if trans women exist. [They] clearly do […] throughout history. […] [She instead] used [her] forty-five minutes to sit in silence."[66] Thus, Frankland decisively utilizes silence as a radical performative utterance. She presents her body and the undeniable fact of her lived experience to disrupt narratives that serve to subjugate the queer body. Frankland at times constructs her body to appear monstrous, but the fact remains, it is her body and no one else's.

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[64] Ibid, 124 & 151.
[65] Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 104.
[66] Frankland, 155.

Queer pride is obviously not unique to Frankland, as Athey is also exhibits a performative joy in his queer sexualities. And again, the embodiment of a monster is not unique to Athey, as this is something which "serves as a bridge linking traumatic histories and futures."[67] Thus, I turn to the performative interventions of Claude Cahun, an artist who delighted in gender play and whose work prior to and during the Shoah actively resisted the narratives around the queer, Jewish subjectivity. Cahun's work is interdisciplinary, as they have created striking photographs, works of collage, and has written theatrical works and other surrealist texts, such as their strange autobiography *Aveux non Avenus* (1930), translated into English as *Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions* (2008), written between the world wars. Cahun often appears as the subject of their own photography, displaying their body in ways that disrupt normative ideas around gender, or portraying themself as a disfigured monster or with a deathly visage "to subvert any social or sexual idées fixe, to destroy those mental images that force the living into a kind of experiential death."[68] However, the monsters Cahun portrays in their photography point specifically to their marginalized identity, both as a queer individual or their Jewish heritage. For example, Cahun's *I Extend my Arms* (Figure 1.) features a body melded with stone, instantly conjuring ideas of Jewish folklore through the golem, a clay construct built to defend the shtetls from the violence of pogroms, while also using queer iconography since "the monolith has an inevitably phallic form, the arms with their ornamentation are feminine, defying a single-gendered reading of the image."[69] Moreover, Cahun's work plays with a lot of the anti-Semitic propaganda of the time, ensuring their nose is prominent and displaying

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[67] Westengard, 123.

[68] Shelley Rice, "Inverted Odysseys" in *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*, ed. Shelley Rice (London: MIT Press, 1999), 24.

[69] Elizabeth Manchester, "*I Extend my Arms*," Tate, last modified January 2008, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/cahun-i-extend-my-arms-p79319.

themself with an almost vampiric appearance, effectively satirizing the hooked-nosed Jewish caricatures and hateful myths of blood libel (Figure 2.). Cahun makes it clear that this monstrous self is a point of pride, as they write "I only believe in the monsters I've created myself, I will only believe in the Messiah who comes down for me in me,"[70] suggesting that they have faith in themself despite all the narratives that display a queer Jew as an other. There is a second meaning to this however, as the monsters to Cahun are those who dehumanize people like them, as such they turn the vitriolic propaganda back on those who see them as *Lebensunwertes Leben*. Thus, Cahun and their life long partner, Marcel Moore, apply the rhetoric of blood-sucking used against Jews to the Nazis and construct them as monsters, leaving leaflets on military police cars which declare "die Soldaten ohne Namen sagen Nieder mit Hitler! Nieder mit Hitler! Nieder mit dem nichtdeutschen Vampir der das Blut unserer Jugend säuft! Nieder mit Krieg!"[71] Cahun and Moore frame Hitler as the vampire, feeding off of the German youth to fuel a war, in an attempt to destabilize the faith soldiers have in the fascist leader. Further, Cahun and Moore operated under the pseudonym *Die Soldaten ohne Namen* to make the dissidence appear as if it was internal with the German occupiers, while stripping themselves of a name which is reminiscent of what will befall queers and Jews alike. Cahun wholeheartedly embraces the role of the other, and in doing so shows the violence in those who dehumanize and categorize.

Cahun's play with the notion of a monstrous identity in their work is a performative intervention, as their artistry frames different groups as the threat for the purpose of satirizing or

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[70] Claude Cahun, *Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions*, trans. Susan de Muth (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 52.

[71] Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, quoted in Ryan Helterbrand, "Plastic / Explosive: Claude Cahun and the Politics of Becoming Otherwise" (PHD dissertation, University of Washington, 2016), 202. https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/36625/Helterbrand_washington_0250E_15816.pdf?sequence=1.
Translates to: "The soldiers with no name say 'Down with Hitler! Down with Hitler! Down with Hitler! Down with the un-German vampire who guzzles the blood of our children! Down with war!'"
(Translation mine)

shining light on fascist cruelties. And while the violence of the Nazi regime occurred prior to the foundations of the pharmacopornographic regime, the latter paradigm certainly evolved out of the former since "[t]he Nazi government, followed by the American government, were the first to experiment with administering doses of testosterone […]. Technologies of gender and technologies of war—the same business."[72] Cahun's work is such an effective and striking performative intervention since the framing of their photographic work operates similarly to the discursive frames of power and war which Butler discusses. Cahun's work is a testament to their life, a radical performative intervention during a time when much of the media and propaganda of the time seeks to deny them that, since "[t]o confirm that a life was, even within the life itself, is to underscore that a life is a grievable life. In this sense the photograph, through its relation to the future anterior, instates grievability."[73] Cahun ensures a grievability of their own life, and in doing so cements their legacy. In an almost Derridean hauntological turn, Butler writes that photography "is linked through its 'tense' to the grievability of a life, anticipating and performing that grievability. In this way, we can be haunted in advance by the suffering or deaths of others. Or we can be haunted afterwards, when the check against grief becomes undone."[74] In photography where they display themself as almost ghoulish, Cahun becomes the ghost that haunts us, and their spirit is one of resistance and of a liberatory model of gender. Cahun seems almost aware that their legacy will be in photographs, as they ask "why hasten towards eternal conclusions? It behoves death, not sleep (another *trompe-l'oeil*), to conclude. Life's role is to leave [Cahun] uncompleted, allow [them] only freeze frames."[75] The performative frame of

[72] *Testo Junkie*, 224.
[73] *Frames of War*, 97.
[74] Ibid, 98.
[75] *Disavowals*, 202.

Cahun's camera establishes them as someone that must be remembered and grieved, but also constructs their appearance in a way that is meaningful to them. In *Performing Remains* (2011), Rebecca Schneider speaks to a certain liminality, and notes that "the past can simultaneously be past – genuine pastness – *and on the move*, co- present, not 'left behind.'"[76] Thus, through the "temporal drag" of their photography,[77] Cahun ensures that they remain in relation to a spectator on their own terms. I refer to Cahun as a proto-nonbinary figure, since they write "[s]huffle the cards. Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits [Cahun]. If it existed in our language no one would be able to see [their] thought's vacillations,"[78] and in their photography they ensure that their ghost takes the form of gender neutrality. Moreover, Cahun's art—like all art— necessitates an emotional response and can never be approached purely objectively. Schneider writes that "affective engagement offers a radical shift in thinking about our mobilities in dealings with the binaried landscapes of social plots (such as gender, such as race), undoing the solidity of binaries in favor of mining the slip and slide of affect as negotiation."[79] Cahun then embodies many shattered binaries, as they are made manifest in the space outside and between a life/death duality in a form which resists a gendered categorization. Through their performative intervention, Cahun's memory lives on in a way that was not available to them in their lifetime. Perhaps that provides them some peace.

Within the pharmacopornographic regime, the subjectivities of all individuals are created in such a way that we are the ideal participants in the capitalist system. Preciado circumvents the biopolitical control over his gender and sexuality by illegally taking testosterone supplements in

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[76] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in the Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 15.
[77] Ibid, 14.
[78] Ibid, 151-152.
[79] Schneider, 36.

such a way that is illegible to the current paradigm as a means to liberate himself. Preciado's ritualistic administration of the hormone is only one possible performative intervention upon the pharmacopornographic regime, as artists like Athey, Cahun, and Frankland all find different ways to cement their own subjectivities through radical performatives. These of course are not the only performative interventions which take place, but the examples I discuss are so radical because they are intensely personal as well as political for the artists, and thus they demand that space is created for themselves and their own ideals within the current system based around domination and subjection of their identities. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which each of the artist's projects are based around community, and why the notion of a vibrant queer community of plurality is necessary for the liberation of all within the pharmacopornographic paradigm.

Three: Forming Community in the Space Between Skin

> *Sometimes we realize too late that we didn't appreciate the dirt and the darkness.*
>
> Hazel Jane Plante,
> *Little Blue Encyclopedia (for Vivian)*

I write this chapter on the heels of the premiere production for my play, *The Immaculate Perfection of Fucking and Bleeding in the Gender Neutral Bathroom of an Upper-Middle Class High School*. The play follows the adolescent queer community that forms within a high school's all-gender washroom after Nat, a young transgender woman in grade twelve, conceives a baby despite being a virgin. Throughout the play, a few characters make reference to the fact that the bathroom has always made them feel safe, but notably this safety always seems tenuous, especially considering it is only cisgender characters who describe the bathroom as a place of refuge. Even prior to the moment where slurs are graffitied onto the stalls or five of the seven characters experience grievous, but non-fatal, physical harm in the penultimate scene, the bathroom does not seem like a true sanctuary for the two explicitly transgender characters. In the first scene, Nat hides as the popular drug dealer, Minnie, and two jocks gossip about her, viciously ridiculing her, unaware that she is confined within a stall. When the jocks, Jack and Jacques, begin to have sex in the stall next to her and as Minnie peddles sexual contraband and drugs over the phone, Nat has no choice but to remain hidden and hope that she is not discovered. Conversely, there is never a moment where Alex, a nonbinary student, is alone in the washroom until the end of the play, as they are consistently dragged into the activities of other students despite their protest. All Alex wants is simply a place to pee, whereas most of the cisgender characters move beyond that utilitarian purpose of the bathroom, seeing it as a place to hang out and attain their various pleasures, and in doing so they deny the transgender students

from having safe access to the space that was created to give them privacy. Nevertheless, these characters are a community; not in spite of, but because of the small, perhaps invisible, violences they bring to each other. Their community is not brought about by the fact that they shield each other from the harm of a world outside the bathroom, nor is it because they are all queer and attend the same school. It is because they care deeply about each other and hurt each other so thoroughly that they carve out a community. Without the growing pains and the lessons they learn in the face of them, the characters would be nothing.

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, I will discuss here the role community plays in the work of the queer artists previously discussed. However, it is first necessary to explain precisely what is meant by "community" here. It is not formed by something as tenuous as proximity or as happenstance. By virtue of having attended a certain institution, I do not think I am necessarily a part of that institution's community. By virtue of being queer, I do not think I am necessarily a member of an impossible, universal queer community. Such a community does not just exist by default, especially not without an active participation or effort. Thus, community has become an increasingly hollow word, signifying an ideal that seems unattainable, or it is used by those in positions of authority to placate, establish a false sense of security, and as justification for transgressing the boundaries of a work/life balance. As Jean-Luc Nancy notes in *The Inoperative Community* (1986, trans. 1991), community is not something that can be simply willed, rather community is "a gift to be renewed and communicated, it is not a work to be done or produced. But it is a task, which is different—an infinite task at the heart of finitude."[80] For Nancy, community is "inoperative" not because it is a too far gone conclusion, but because it cannot be the result of work or an operation. Nevertheless, it is sought after in a response to the

[80] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Inoperative Community" in *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 35.

mourning of something that has never truly existed. There is a pervasive myth in the Occident of a historical, now broken community during "a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious, and infrangible bonds and in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy, and autonomy."[81] This nostalgia has always been a part of the Western consciousness in the form of a yearning for past fraternity, and now manifests in a desire for a(n often Christian) sameness so that we may return to a nonexistent model of community wherein everyone is pointed towards the same desire, which has always been in reality founded on oppression. So long as there are attempts for community based on similarity, the only thing that will arise is exclusion, a dangerous immanence that is in essence totalitarian. Even championing a universal human community entails violence against all that is not human.

Despite community being impossible to establish through work, I still maintain that the work produced by Preciado, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun allows for the possibility of a distinctly queer community. Moreover, I will argue that it is because of the queerness and liberatory nature of the artistic practices that a Nancean community may be approached. For Nancy, community is experiential, as "[c]ommunity *is* the experience of finitude, […] the exposition of finitude and the finitude it exposes. That is, the finitude of *singular being*, of being singular plural, of finite being—infinitely finite, infinitely exposing its finitude and exposing it *as* community."[82] It is the experience of "being singular plural" that allows for the possibility of a community, which may sound paradoxical, but is in fact fundamental to being. Through his work, including *The Inoperative Community* and *Being Singular Plural* (1996, trans. 2000) later

[81] Ibid, 9.
[82] María del Rosario Acosta López. "An Infinite Task at the Heart of Finitude: Jean-Luc Nancy on Community and History," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 17, no. 3 (2017): 24.

in his career, Nancy highlights a fundamental oversight in Heideggerian thought; to exist is to be in relation, *Dasein* already (and always) is a *Mitsein*, as being is inseparable from a proximity to other beings. To be is to already be in relation, to experience the unending number of finite beings around us, from other humans and animals who will one day die, to the stones that will be eroded over time, and to the rain that has yet to come, but will one day drown the trees. There is both a temporal aspect to this finitude and a spatial one, as the transient nature of things lays the groundwork for community, and the physical proximity grants me definition. Nancy writes:

> We would not be 'humans' if there were not 'dogs' and 'stones.' A stone is the exteriority of singularity in what would have to be called its mineral or mechanical actuality. But I would no longer be a 'human' if I did not have this exteriority 'in me,' in the form of the quasi-minerality of bone: I would no longer be a human if I were not a body, a spacing of all other bodies and a spacing of 'me' in 'me.' A singularity is always a body, and all bodies are singularities (the bodies, their states, their movements, their transformations).[83]

If it were not for all the things I am not, I would not be me. It is not only the physical form of beings that lend definition, but also the interior states. I am given definition through my relationality to the hopes, fears, desires, dreams of myself and everyone around me. While our gendered and sexual subjectivities may be constituted by the pharmaceutical and pornographic industries, our being is the result of every passing connection. When I speak of community then, I am ultimately referring to a gift; community as a willingness in beings to experience all other beings. Nancy is adamant that "we must expose ourselves to what has gone unheard in community. Sharing comes down to this: what community reveals to me, in presenting to me my birth and my death, is my existence outside myself. […] *Community does not sublate the finitude it exposes. Community itself, in sum, is nothing but this exposition*."[84] Community is an act of

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[83] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Of Being Singular Plural" in *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Anne O'Byrne and Robert Richardson (California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 18.
[84] "Inoperative Community," 26.

sharing, for in you giving me definition, I give definition to you. There may be a queer community only if it is not predicated on all members of its being queer, but instead on focusing on the fact that queerness entails difference. Queerness rejects uniformity, and insists that we learn from each other. It is in this sense of community—where we draw in the breath of each other—that the projects of Preciado, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun operate.

I have an unending amount of respect and gratitude for the older queers and for those who struggled to be themselves when there was not even accessible language to speak to their own being. If it were not for my proximity to language or relationships with a number of queer people who I love and get to call friends, I am certain I would not be so assured in who I am. Against a grey backdrop, I would lack definition. This experience is not unique to me, as many queers learn about themselves in parallel and contrast with other queers, for instance "transmasculine identities […] emerge[] and become[] legible only in relation to each other and gain their meaning and coherence from its ordered relation to similar, but not identical, positions on the spectrum of masculinity."[85] By knowing men, I can say with certainty, I am not one.[86] Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapter, queerness may be seen as a simultaneous sort of wounding and prideful showcasing of the scar, which is similar to how Nancy describes receptivity, since the act of "listening is to be inclined toward the opening of meaning, hence to a slash, a cut in un-sensed indifference at the same time as toward a reserve that is anterior and

[85] Salamon, 120

[86] An aside or a ghost story. I wanted to mark this spot in the page to make note of a personal occurrence from eleven days ago, which feels relevant to this chapter or may be completely disconnected. That is up to you. Perhaps I am just making use of this space to share a memory or two. Last week, I was in Halifax, Nova Scotia for a friend's wedding, and was working on this chapter in a coffee shop I used to frequent. I swear that I see a friend from high school enter and order coffee before quickly leaving. I have not spoken to him in 3 years, so I send a message to ask if he is in the city. Less than half an hour later, as I finished writing the above sentence, another friend from those days calls me out of the blue to say the person I swear I had just seen passed away the night before. I do not think I have ever met a "cis-man" more assured and comfortable with his masculinity. Thank you for allowing me to know you, from here on out, I dedicate this chapter to you.

posterior to any signifying punctuation."[87] Community then is a refusal to be reduced into a homogeneity, and it involves an awareness of everything around you which gives definition and may also harm. As noted in Nikki Sullivan's *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (2003), Nancean community is seen

> in and through the transgression of boundaries, identities, categories. Thus community is an unworking of the humanist model of identity and sociality. Community, in this sense, rather than denying or covering over differences in the service of unity, is the experience of the impossibility of communion, the experience of radical difference.[88]

Nancy speaks often about the role of love and the function of the heart, especially following his transplant of that organ. To love is to allow yourself vulnerability, permitting yourself to be exposed, for as "soon as there is love, the slightest act of love, the slightest spark, there is this ontological fissure that cuts across and that disconnects the elements of the subject-proper—the fibers of its heart. One hour of love is enough, one kiss alone, provided that it is out of love—and can there, in truth, be any other kind?"[89] Community is predicated by the possibility of loving that which is finite, or rather loving despite the finitude. It is listening to and loving all that which is not Daniel that gives me definition, as "[t]he heart exposes, and it is exposed. It loves, it is loved, it does not love, it is not loved," and to say that I love you means that "'I' is posed only by being exposed to 'you.'"[90] Queer love must be the foundation for a community, because it is a loving of everything that falls outside your form and an affirmation of it. The metaphors of queerness, Nancean love, and listening as wounding are so resonant precisely because "[t]he beating of the heart is a shattering of the self, a cutting into shards, but this cutting is not a

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[87] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 27.
[88] Nikki Sullivan, "Community and its Discontents" in *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 148.
[89] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Shattered Love" in *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Lisa Garbus and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 96.
[90] Ibid, 89.

diminishment or a separation so much as an affirmation and amplification of difference."[91] Regardless of the pain brought on by everything in the world, it gives us definition (for which I am grateful), there is affirmation (for which I am grateful), and there will always be love (for which I am grateful). Not only do I believe that queer community is feasible, I believe that community is only possible if it is queer, as Preciado, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun all demonstrate.

Fundamentally, community is the result of love, difference, and attentiveness, but what cements queer community as that which must exist is its function for Nancy as resistance. Preciado's project against the pharmacopornographic regime manifests through a desire to be illegible to the paradigm, and thus to reclaim a sexual and gendered subjectivity. Preciado's hope of a widespread gender hacking is a hope that totalizing categories may be done away with as "the fact that your body, the body of the *multitude* and the pharmacopornographic networks that constitute them are political laboratories, both effects of the process of subjection and control and potential spaces for political agency and critical resistance to normalization."[92] All of *Testo Junkie* could be considered an exploration of how Preciado is redefined through his listening, love, and relation with testosterone, and thus breaking from the model which subjugates through an insistent categorization—an enforcing of sameness. Thus, Preciado's work operates as a project for the benefit of Nancean community, since Nancy writes that "[c]ommunity is, in a sense, resistance itself: namely, resistance to immanence."[93] The pharmacopornographic can easily be thought of as that which is immanent, a denial of forming subjectivities through

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[91] Daniel Sander, "I Stand in Ruins Behind You: Queer Tactics of Noise," *Lateral* 3, (2013): https://doi.org/10.25158/L3.1.16.
[92] *Testo Junkie*, 348.
[93] "Inoperative Community," 35.

relations beyond itself. In the previous chapter, I discussed how within the totalizing paradigm, subjectivity is constructed in relation to absences, as "[t]echnoscience has established its material authority by transforming the concepts of the psyche, libido, consciousness, femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality into tangible realities."[94] The pharmacopornographic forms identities by offering images of what the subject is not, which is not un-Nancean, however the pharmacoporngaraphic paints the relations as failings to overcome and difference is seen as something to be collapsed. The pharmacopornographic shows you a picture of an attractive human being, and instead of allowing you to be in relation to them as two subjectivities who could learn from each other, the pharmacopornographic whispers in your ear, 'this could be you. All you need is this injection, this surgery, this pill, this product.' The false norm is created, and you are chided for falling short. The only relations that matter in the pharmacopornographic are those that can be changed, and thus profited from, as definition is no longer found in the subject's relation to stones, animals, nature, other people, and their complexities, but in relation to the arbitrary labels of a pharmacoporgnographic regime. Preciado's project is liberatory precisely because he administers the exact commodity which the paradigm presents as not being for him, and he does so without the pharmacopornographic's knowledge or approval. In a Nancean community, I am composed of my relation to everything I am not, but in the pharmacopornographic era, I am placed in exclusionary identity categories, and my deviance marks me as a failure.

Perhaps Nancean community is only possible in the dismantling of the pharmacopornographic, when a universal queerness—that is to say difference—is accepted, and it is realized that arbitrary labels do little beyond harm. Preciado discusses the main concern of

[94] *Testo Junkie*, 34.

the pharmacopornographic being the *potentia gaudendi*, the body's capacity for excitation, as the present model relegates it to a tool which capitalism is based on. However, the *potentia gaudendi* is perhaps another way of conceiving *Mitsein*, albeit sexier, as Preciado writes:

> [I]t has no gender; it is neither male nor female, neither human nor animal, neither animated nor inanimate. […] Orgasmic force is the sum of the potential for excitation inherent in every material molecule. Orgasmic force is not seeking any immediate resolution, and it aspires only to its own extension in space and time, toward everything and everyone, in every place and at every moment. It is a force of transformation for the world in pleasure—'in pleasure with.'[95]

Preciado's *Mitlust*, so to speak, is exploited in the pharmacopornographic paradigm, and just as the regime closes us from relations outside a pharmaceutical or pornographic context, it denies the subject an awareness of its capacity to experience pleasure with. For Preciado, "we are being confronted by the most depraved of political situations: the body isn't aware of its *potentia gaudendi* as long as it does not put it to work,"[96] which is to say that the body is made unaware of all other desiring materials that constantly surround it, and in turn the subject under pharmacopornographic capitalism may not know itself. It is naïve to think that love and desire are the same thing, but it would be callous to suggest that they do not sometimes intersect like interlocking fingers. Nancy points to almost a death in desire, *la petite mort* perhaps, as he notes "[d]esire is self extending toward its end—but love does not extend, nor does it extend itself toward an end. If it is extended, it is by an upheaval of the other in me."[97] However, Nancy's claim does not ring true under the pharmacopornographic model, as the subject that is shifted in the current paradigm is "compliant enough to put its *potentia gaudendi* […] at the service of the production of capital and the reproduction of the species."[98] Which is to say that desire is not a

[95] Ibid, 41-42.
[96] Ibid, 46.
[97] "Shattered Love," 98.
[98] *Testo Junkie*, 119.

death for the subject, but a continuation of a narrative which benefits a system that functions on a lack of satisfaction in the desiring body. If the desire is framed as falling under a label (heterosexual, homosexual, etc.), then the pharmacopornographic propaganda continues to circulate from each generation to the next. Desire cannot be 'self extending toward its end' anymore, because desire no longer belongs to the self—desire is pharmacopornographic extending, capitalism flourishing. Desire will bring the self to an end, because it will become impossible to know the self through the totalizing sameness that pharmacopornographic mechanisms yearn for. Thus, Preciado's work is undoubtedly a practice of Nancean community with the ever-prescient refusal to submit to immanence, as community "performs and represents, once and again, 'the inscription of our infinite resistance' to anything that would attempt to bring community to an 'end,' namely, anything that would attempt to bring it to completion and, thus, simultaneously, to finish it off, to force its end."[99] Ultimately then, the narratives of a queer subjectivity and of a Nancean community go hand in hand as dialectics of perseverance. Community cannot be stopped, and neither can new, queer life which will always come into relation with the rest of the world.

I will soon discuss the radical practice of Ron Athey again and how it is beneficial to a Nancean idea of community, but I must first complicate his place in this thesis. Up until now, I have discussed him primarily in a positive light, but that is a disservice, as his interest in far right politics and its iconography ought not be overlooked. It is from a place of privilege that Ron Athey is able to look back on his brief exploration of skinhead culture and attribute that to a youthful curiosity, writing that he never "considered [him]self a real skinhead, but over the years, [he had] become more and more intrigued, some might say obsessed with the skinhead

[99] López, 26.

cult."[100] No matter how brief his involvement was, his participation is as real as the swastika tattoo on the back of his neck. Even though both his activity and tattoo have been covered in ink, the trace of them remains deeply felt, especially considering "Flirting with the Far Right" feels like a misguided justification. It does not matter that skinheads emerge from a Jamaican movement, as acknowledging the source of appropriation does not dispel the harm. Nor does it matter that Athey's swastika tattoo was meant to be "an Indonesian version taken from a textile pattern,"[101] it permitted him access into a vitriolic space where he felt comfortable. However, Athey's capacity to flourish in spaces indicative of both fascistic immanence and queer openness point to why his work is so capable of benefiting a Nancean ideal. Simon Wu explores the tension of Athey's subjectivity, writing that his "identities as poor or working class, queer, and anticapitalist sometimes put him in the space of the minoritarian, his identities as white, male, and passable for a Neo-Nazi might put him in the space of the majoritarian."[102] I feel conflicted about Athey's history, as it is something that we are always in relation to, but the work Athey has done to benefit a queer community is undeniable. At the close of Wu's brief essay, he arrives at a Nancean conclusion, noting that he "understand[s] Athey's work as a model for engaging the types of conflicts that queer communions can engender. Communions can be uncomfortable and difficult – but they can also constitute the work of building a coalition across race and class."[103] Thus, Athey's place in this thesis is undeniable, because unlike other artists I have discussed, he is uniquely capable of navigating the most totalizing of spaces. In doing so, he may queer the definitions of everyone around him, especially those of his critics.

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[100] Ron Athey, "Ron Athey's Dissections: Flirting with the Far Right" in *Queer Communion: Ron Athey*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andy Campbell (Bristol: Intellect, 2020), 105, originally published in *Honcho* (June 1997).
[101] Ibid.
[102] Simon Wu, "Ron Athey's 'Far-Right Flirtations,'" *Momus*, April 27, 2021, https://momus.ca/ron-atheys-far-right-flirtations/.
[103] Ibid.

In both biography and artistry, Ron Athey is marked by openings. There are the literal openings of tears in the flesh, of orifices, and of doors to spaces that smell like sweat where queer performance occurs, there is the metaphorical opening of hearts and minds to the suffering of a diseased and queer body, and there is the young Athey who was forced open by his Pentecostal family to receive a holy word. Athey's process of ritualizing and queering his trauma has been discussed, transforming Christian violence into a queer pleasure. Fervent Christianity has not only brought harm to Athey, but also to Nancean community, as "the true consciousnesss [sic] of the loss of community is Christian: […] community might well be the altogether modern thought of humanity's partaking of divine life: the thought of a human being penetrating into pure immanence."[104] To know oneself only through the light of God is to be cut off and isolated, to deny the possibility of community and lack definition, as that subject is that which God is not. If the pharmacopornographic immanence wants for a sameness of body and subjectivity, Christianity strives for a uniformity of spirituality and devotion. There is an undeniable religiosity to his work, for Atheyism, as opposed to atheism, is not the belief that there is no holy spirit, but rather is the belief that the holy spirit resides in those who are willing to be open and expressive. In a messily scrawled note from the late 1980s, Athey writes that it is not the meek, but rather the "[e]xhibitionists [who] shall inherit the earth."[105] What is virtuous for Athey is not devotion to and desire to become one with that which lies beyond, but is a showcasing of yourself to everything around you, an unabashed placing of yourself in relation to the world around you. Athey's queer, sadomasochistic Christianity is welcoming of all and as the congregation are placed in relation to his pain:

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[104] "Inoperative Community," 10.

[105] Ron Athey, "'There used to come to that point… a lump of meat,' handwritten notes, recovery writing, late 1980s," in *Queer Communion: Ron Athey*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andy Campbell (Bristol: Intellect, 2020), 167.

> [A] community of shared suffering might emerge – witnesses who can go outward into the world with a more nuanced and vulnerable sense of what it means to experience pain because of the forbidden trajectories of one's own desires, because of illness, because of the way in which the fears of others project dirt and ugliness onto the glorious rays of the sun that illuminate your most proud nether regions which, for you, might be the most important site of erotic pleasure.[106]

Athey's work opens something in the audience, but it is also the only church where a true Christian community may emerge. This Christianity is obviously a queer one, where the saints and martyrs are indistinguishable from the sodomites because they are one and the same. Julie Tolentino, after performing alongside Athey in *The Sky Remains the Same*, writes that the performance is

> an offer for audiences looking at and with us as we engage with each other's performance communiqués as history and desire marked by these intimate accounts and the precarious impact of our need. Historically, queer archives are just like this. We know them—and they live out in our closets, our musty ideals, old family albums—in our bodies. Like bodies, they leak in the manner of broken-down houses, boats, and relationships. So perhaps, we are ships. We cross in the many nightfalls. We carry so much, some of it at a cost. […] In spirit, we take up each other's wake and the weight as we haunt the vast horizon.[107]

For Tolentino, the experience of performing alongside Athey constitutes an opening, an exposition, but what is revealed is not only the body, but also a shoddy archive of everything that each has been in relation to. Community is formed in the space between their skin, and it is one which envelops the audience, as the trace of their histories and desires are deeply felt. There is indeed a haunting, as each has been in relation to profound loss, and that is shared with the audience. In a Nancean community everything is shared, especially suffering, for when we mourn, we mourn together.

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[106] "The Political Potential of Upsetting Art," 160.

[107] Julie Tolentino, "An Unruly Archive by Each of us Towards Each of us," in *Queer Communion: Ron Athey*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andy Campbell (Bristol: Intellect, 2020), 284.

While it is true that there is no community without love and the relationality it provides, it is also true that there is no community without death, that which points towards our finitude. Nancy writes that "[d]eath is indissociable from community, for it is through death that the community reveals itself—and reciprocally,"[108] and as such I often find myself grateful for grief. Loss and the pain that accompanies has always served as a tremendous and brutal reminder that I possess a capacity for love. However, for Nancy the death of each member of community becomes endowed with meaning, as "[c]ommunity is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others. Community is what takes place always through others and for others."[109] Thus, I am made to wonder what remains when everyone around you passes. In an interview with Zackary Drucker, Athey claims that "[w]hen [his] whole world was consumed by AIDS, when people around [him] started dying, when every one of his heroes was gone, it felt like the book of apocalypse […] If you lose all your friends and community and have to start over, you have a community hole."[110] Another one of Athey's openings is visible here, as death carves out another vacuous hole. However, Athey places audiences in relation to these losses, and makes them an integral part of a Nancean community. The dead and the audiences swirl together, as those Athey grieves are present as ghosts and memory, but also as corporeal representations on stage, often imbued with a palpable holiness. For instance, one of Athey's "'saints' was his close friend Cliff Diller […] [who] died in 1992, and is memorialized in the opening image of *Martyrs & Saints*, in a

[108] "Inoperative Community," 15.
[109] Ibid, 16.
[110] Ron Athey, "Ron Athey," interview by Zackary Drucker, *Bomb Magazine*, no. 139 (Spring 2017): 51.

scene where Athey realized one of Diller's morphine-induced hallucinations."[111] Athey takes up those he mourns on stage, sometimes embodying them, turning them into holy figures who demand love, and thus "[e]ach performance […] is explicitly an attempt at community-building in a time of crisis."[112] He ensures that those who are lost are integral to the community that forms in the wake of his artistry, since the 'community hole' is perhaps not a lack of community, but is rather the community made manifest by the absence that is felt in the wake of loss. Athey drills this community hole into the audience so that there is the potential for collective mourning, serving as reminder that "disaster can bind its sufferers in friendship and love – as a kind of camaraderie borne in the face of death."[113] The way Athey's work is centered around a politics of community care is twofold. On one hand, he ensures that an audience cares about the dead and remains in relation to them, so that they may still be cared for, and on the other, his work is a reminder to cherish each other in the face of finitude. We must enjoy our bodies and the bodies of others while we can. Further, as Emma Frankland demonstrates, we must protect each other while we engage in these practices of care.

There is a naturally Nancean bent in the work of Emma Frankland, as she places value in her capacity to experience and be in relation to the spaces she navigates. At the start of *None of Us is Yet a Robot*, she claims that her "book articulates a 'duty of care' […] of a social responsibility to one's community and the world around us […] to be honest and bold and to respond to the world as we truthfully experience it."[114] For

[111] "Moral and Just," 28.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid, 31.
[114] Frankland, 9.

Frankland, the duty of care she undertakes is not simply for a queer community, but a community of everything and everyone she encounters. She believes her duty to be a navigation of the world in which she never allows any sort of denial of her identity. She is adamant that the world remains in relation to transness, so that her transness is a fact always contained in the definition of the things outside of her. Frankland places transness at the core of a Nancean community, as she writes that she "believe[s] that to be a trans person is to be a person with an essential role in a balanced and harmonious society."[115] As such, Frankland, with a seemingly endless reserve of patience, includes a number of performances seemingly catered to audiences who lack familiarity with transness in her series around her trans experience and personal 'journey.' The first play in the collection *None of Us is Yet a Robot*, "Language," explores the performative language that swirls around the trans body for a largely cisgender audience, and throughout the performance she graffitis the inside of the theatre with the labels and images that are often used to arbitrarily mark gender. She likens this act of spray painting to ink deep in the flesh, as she writes that "spraying these images and words to the walls of a theatre was an act of rebellion: in the same way as trans people often tattoo [their] skin, [she] was marking the building."[116] Frankland welcomes cisgender and straight audience members into the theatre, framing the show as a chance for them to be educated about trans identity, all while she reshapes the theatre into her own image. In essence, she helps the theatre along in its own transition, and everyone exists like a microbe in its queer body. "Language" ends with a simple fact, "once you have taken something apart the possibilities have

[115] Ibid, 10.
[116] Ibid, 29.

expanded. And to put it back to its original form is only one of its many possible states."[117] After being placed in relation to Frankland, her audiences will never be the same, their relation to her transness will always impress upon their skin. Even once her work is painted over, the trace of it remains, and all audiences who enter the theatre are in relation to this historical moment of queer body modification.

Frankland's willingness to welcome cisgender audiences to educate them highlights the anti-immanent nature of this project, as she ensures that people are in relation to the simple fact of her trans subjectivity. I cannot help but think of my own tattoos, something fixed on my own otherwise fluid and finite body. My tattoos are certainly some sort of reclamation, even if they do not disrupt the pharmacopornographic model, they help my body—and consequently, my subjectivity—feel more like my own. They certainly speak to the permanent impression that my queer relations have imparted on me, with over a third of my tattoos having been left on my skin by nonbinary friends, my chosen family, from their hand, the needle to my skin. Frankland's remark about 'marking the building' as trans bodies do is prescient, not only in light of Athey's wide array of bodily modifications (including the swastika), but because of the trace it leaves. Frankland's spray painting is not really tattooing, because even if the building is an appendage on the planet, the world does not have skin. However, Nancy identifies that the reason our planet lacks this massive organ is not because it is not a living thing, but rather it "does not have skin because it is itself nothing other than – to put it like that – the factorial of all our skins. It is and is nothing but the whole of combinations, assemblages, rubbings, pressures, caresses […] which all our skins unceasingly

[117] Ibid, 61.

exchange."[118] I wonder then how many tattooed queers does it take to give the world a full sleeve of ink, small designs composed of memories and cherished things. Thus, I turn to Frankland's second play in *None of Us is Yet a Robot*, "Doodle," which is in direct response to "Language"'s openness to receive cisgender audiences. "Doodle" confronts the expectation faced by trans people that we "will be willing (even grateful) to answer questions or debate [our] identity. Always with an understanding that it is the trans person's duty to convince or chance the cis person's opinion."[119] Where "Language" welcomes cis audiences into a space in the process of being queered, "Doodle" pushes the queer inking into the public. Frankland simply sits outside with a large board, and allows for any passersby to stop and have a conversation with her. During these conversations, which often turn to discussion of gender, Frankland draws small records of moments in the dialogue with strangers that stand out. However, the resulting illustrations are not the significant aspect of the 'performance,' as each "doodle comes second. The doodle is a fossil, a trace left of a live connection between two people."[120] Thus, in its wake, "Doodle" leaves evidence that at some point there were bodies who sat in proximity to each other, proof that relationality is possible. Moreover, the "doodle" is a mark of anti-capitalist activity, signifying a love of childlike creativity for the joy of creation. This anti-capitalist bent is further exemplified by Frankland placing the piece outside the traditional confines of a theatre, for anyone is capable of beginning a conversation with her, leading to "an accessible way for people to disrupt public

[118] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The World's Fragile Skin," trans. Marie Chabbert and Nikolaas Deketelaere, *Angelaki* 26, no. 3-4 (2021): 14.
[119] Frankland, 64.
[120] Ibid, 75.

space."[121] The entire world lies in relation to Frankland's simple illustrations, placing all space at the edge of these moments of openness. Frankland's work is then a testament to the fact that everyone is always in relation to queer bodies. Every place you enter, you are likely in relation to queer bodies that have or will one day exist there as well. Frankland highlights that to exist is to be surrounded by the trace or premonition of queerness. Thus, I turn to the historical trace left by Claude Cahun, who clearly demonstrates a desire for anti-immanence prior to Nancy's writing.

While the bulk of Claude Cahun's career did not take place under totalitarian conditions, the spirit of resistance against immanence is something that has always been central to their work. Almost predicting the articulations of Nancy, under the heading of "Singular Plural" in *Disavowals*, Cahun writes:

> Love. The act itself is the creation of the flesh - flash of heat, a star so brief there's no time to formulate a wish, we're scarcely sure we even glimpsed it […]. We come out of our splendid isolation, lend ourselves to the world. My lover will no longer be the subject of my drama, he will be my collaborator. […] Make a new skin every night, and a new landscape.[122]

For Cahun, this act of love is the construction of flesh, of the body, and of the subjectivity it contains. In the act of loving, we become open not just to the other, but to the world as a whole, as all that we are in relation to takes a collaborative role. Love is a transformative process that constructs both the body of those who love, but also the world around them. Further, like Nancy, Cahun is suspicious of devotion to a holy unity, as they write "[s]elling one's soul to God: is to betray the Other."[123] Cahun is adamant that this

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[121] Ibid, 68.
[122] *Disavowals*, 102-103.
[123] Ibid, 139.

love should not be directed to any sort of sameness, since it is a tremendous opportunity for self-discovery. Cahun goes so far as to say that love should be given to an "enemy […] and it will be reciprocated."[124] Thus, there is hope that in loving those who hate, we will both be transformed to become open to the world. This is not to say that Cahun has love for those who ascribe to fascism, but rather that they use this idea of a transformative love to disrupt fascistic machinations through their practice of resistance.

Cahun refuses to stop working and fighting during a time where they ought to feel the most vulnerable as queer and as Jew, categories which marked them as irreconcilable with the sought after violent purity. For Nancy, fascism is a want for pure immanence, as it is "the grotesque or abject resurgence of an obsession with communion; it crystallized the motif of its supposed loss and the nostalgia for its images of fusion."[125] Thus, Cahun's moniker of *Die Soldaten ohne Namen*, which their anti-Nazi propaganda was attributed to, effectively destabilized the sense that there was a true 'communion,' as "[t]hey tucked the pamphlets into newspapers and coat pockets, attempting to sway German soldiers into mutiny and give the impression of a large anti-Nazi conspiracy within the German ranks."[126] Cahun's work under *Die Soldaten ohne Namen* ensured the development of two mutually exclusive narratives: either there was dissent and no *real* sense of communion, or alternatively, relation with critics of Hitler and the Holocaust are integral to the community which aims for pure immanence. Ultimately, Cahun's very survival is testament to the fact that any endeavor for pure immanence is bound to fail.

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[124] Ibid, 102.
[125] "Inoperative Community," 17.
[126] Jennifer Shaw, *Reading Claude Cahun's* Disavowals (New York: Routledge, 2016): 218.

Before concluding this chapter, I want to address the way in which Claude Cahun is made manifest in my own community. While I know not to privilege sameness, I cannot help but feel gratitude towards Cahun as a fellow Jew whose gender lies outside the binary. Besides, I am still in relation to them, for the way in which I am singular plural "goes in all directions at once, in all the directions of all the space-times opened by presence to presence: all things, all beings, all entities, everything past and future, alive, dead."[127] My relationship with Cahun is similar to my relationship with the eight different genders discussed within the *Talmud*, there is evidence of my formation in the time that precedes me. It makes me feel a little less alone, and for that reason, I hold Cahun with the same reverence Athey holds his friends who died too young so that they may remain perpetual fixtures in community—so that they may remain loved. While it is impossible for me to ascertain the form they currently take, Cahun writes "[p]ostscript: At present [they] exist in another way,"[128] and I think about those other people I love who exist in other unknowable ways. I think of my friend, with fluid in her lungs and two younger sisters who look so much like her, who exists now as part of a vast fungal network thanks to the advent of mushroom burial suits. I think of my friend who I saw last month, spectral in a coffee shop as I typed this document, who exists now relegated to a footnote and in the memory of us as children riding bicycles and cleaning vomit after early experiments and experiences with underage drinking. I remain in relation to them both. I remain in relation to you all. Thank you.

[127] "Singular Plural," 3.
[128] *Disavowals*, 12

I wrote *The Immaculate Perfection of Fucking and Bleeding in the Gender Neutral Bathroom of an Upper-Middle Class High School* as a means to investigate the early communities that shaped me, something I saw as sacred. The play ends with all the characters developing some sort of openness to the world, recognizing the ways in which the other students have made them grow, but they understand how different they are from each other. I had a community when I was younger, but not because we were all queers. The fact of our collective queerness is something that we were not all aware of then. I had community because I had people who made me feel safe, despite the harm we would occasionally inflict on each other. I had people who taught me how to love and how to be open, which gave me the courage to explore my own subjectivities. Openness and love are absolutely crucial so that we may overcome the harm placed on us by the pharmacopornographic regime—a system which flourishes on us not knowing each other or ourselves.

Four: Disidentity and the Goodness of Grief

I see you in everything
All of the places that we have been
Remember all the times you let me in
Each night we're getting cold
Wondered if we could come home
Patience is a virtue friend
It fixes things you'll never mend
So be patient for a while
Show off your teeth and smile

Bells Larsen, "Stories Meant to Help"

It is September 9th and I am sitting in the kitchen of my apartment. The window faces south and the sun feels warm. I listen to CKUA, a local donor-funded radio station, which quickly became a staple in my daily life during the time I have been living in Edmonton. A song plays and I am caught off guard by my familiarity with the musician's voice. The musician is a dear friend who lives several provinces over, and the shock of hearing his disembodied voice fills me with an immense queer pride. Pride remains, but it is also soon joined by a sadness. I am overjoyed for the success and perseverance of members of my trans family, but pride stands in relation to melancholia because of how much has needed to be overcome. Any queer pride I feel is mixed with upset and a sense of loss because I know how much harm there has been and I know that not everyone has or will be able to survive. Bells Larsen's album was released today, and their beautiful collection of songs shares a sentiment with much of what I have discussed. Larsen's new album, *Good Grief*, is *Bildungsroman* in music and it is a warm lamentation following the death of their first love. I expressed briefly in the last chapter that I am appreciative of grief because it has shown me how much and how deeply I can love. In Larsen's album, I hear that same gratitude echoed. I wonder then if it is a trans or queer phenomenon to suffer and in turn love through both circumstance and necessity. I think of another close friend of mine, with

whom I started writing letters back and forth at the outset of the pandemic. Enclosed in these letters are confessions, stray thoughts, and whispers where we have experimented with new subjectivities. Also enclosed are remnants of the things we have touched and traces of each other, having mailed strands of hair, rocks and flowers we have touched, and small works of art (one letter even included a chewed up wad of gum, from one of our mouths to the fingers of the other). These letters are an archive of sorts for a uniquely queer friendship and are a testament to how we have both changed and grown together despite great distances. In one letter, my friend writes "though it may sound grim, it's nice to share grief with you. People gone too young. People we loved dearly. I'm proud of both of us. For only getting cooler and sexier with grief."[129] In both my correspondence with a dear friend and Larsen's new album, I can see clearly this impulse towards a positive relationship with and manifestation of grief. In this chapter, I will explore how performatively framing grief as a positive force is a survival tactic for many trans and queer subjects under the pharmacopornographic regime as a disidentifactory practice. Moreover, I will also discuss the disidentifications at play in the work of Paul Preciado, Ron Athey, Emma Frankland, and Claude Cahun.

Within the pharmacopornographic system, which punishes those with non-normative identities, assimilation involves a certain oblivion for the self while outright rejection can lead to grievous harm. Thus, in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), José Esteban Muñoz articulates a third "mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather,

[129] W. A. Rath, letter to the author, July 1st, 2021. When asked about how they would like for their name to appear in this chapter (and if they would like it to appear at all), they opted for W. A. Rath, the name that would have been given to them if they "were born a boy." Their father had wanted their initials to spell WAR had they been categorized as male upon birth. This name, I can only assume, would regularly appear as W. Rath as well. Names can in fact be a wrathful and violent thing, and thus I am grateful for the safe spaces we hold for each other on paper, finding malleability and softness in the brutal fight against systems that want to see us demarcated.

disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology."[130] Disidentification involves the minoritarian subject simultaneously subverting and operating within the heteropatriarchal, racist, and otherwise prejudiced framework, as they performatively insert and read their body into the narrative. For Muñoz, disidentification has much higher stakes than many theories around performativity, as it is "a survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously."[131] Moreover, like the performative speech act, there is a tremendous capacity for transformation in disidentifactory gestures. However, while my speech acts complicate and create space in language to include my queer subjectivity, disidentification's final goal is a lot more grand:

> Disidentifactory performances opt to do more than simply tear down the majoritarian public sphere. They disassemble that sphere of publicity and use its parts to build an alternative reality. Disidentification uses the majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world. […] Disidentifactory performance's performativity is manifest through strategies of iteration and *re*iteration. Disidentifactory performances are performative acts of conjuring that deform and reform the world. *This reiteration builds worlds*.[132]

Muñoz's Butlerian turn here is a reminder of the ways in which the subject is performatively formed by the narratives and articulations around their identity, and that these discursive frames portray certain subjects as less worthy of grief. With the current paradigm's violent reaction to those with non-normative subjectivities, Butler recognizes the dehumanization at play, writing that "because a living being may die, it is necessary to care for that being so that it may live. Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters."[133] Originally published in 2009, Butler's

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[130] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 11.
[131] Ibid, 4.
[132] Ibid, 196.
[133] *Frames of War*, 14.

use of the phrase 'life that matters' is extremely prescient, with the Black Lives Matter movement beginning four years later in the aftermath of Trayvon Martin's death. Harm faced by marginalized communities are performatively framed as permissible due to a lack of action, and thus the Black Lives Matter movement could be considered a call for public grief and outrage. Moreover, grief is entwined with practices of disidentification, as Muñoz writes that "[d]isidentification shares structures of feeling with Freudian melancholia, but the […] works of mourning that [Muñoz is] discussing offer no such escape from the lost object. Rather, the lost object returns with a vengeance. It is floated as an ideal, a call to collectivize, an identity-affirming example."[134] Freudian melancholia is a form of grief where the subject mourns, but is unsure of "*was er an ihm verloren hat*,"[135] which is to say that the melancholic subject is grieving a loss that resists identification and cannot be comprehended. As it remains unknowable, melancholy does not cease. In noting that disidentification is structurally similar to this mode of grief, Muñoz points to the incomprehensible extent that the minoritarian subject is harmed within the current paradigm. Be it during the height of the AIDS/HIV crisis or any moment of quotidian prejudice in the day to day, the number of minoritarian subjects who have died as a result of the pharmacopornographic regime's callous and violent framing and exclusion of non-normative bodies will never be known. Yet, we must grieve them all. It is my contention then that the queer framing of grief as positive is a disidentificatory practice precisely because of how we use the material of grief itself to find joy and assuredness. Moreover, minoritarian subjects need to transform grief into something light to survive, lest the weight of it crush us.

[134] Muñoz, 52.

[135] Sigmund Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie," last modified June 1st, 2010, https://www.textlog.de/freud-psychoanalyse-trauer-melancholie-psychologie.html.

Before I continue, I must first address the way in which this thesis is a disidentifactory work, but also above all else, a project of grief. It is my hope that by using the materials and knowledges that I have acquired while navigating academia as a nonbinary individual, I am able to transform its often inaccessible structures. By including my queer body in academic institutions and appropriating various theories to be applicable for queer life, I trust that I queer academia through this thesis and in quotidian life as a daily practice. Further, I take inspiration from Preciado, as I have included a "combination of theoretical analysis and personal narrative [as] a textual strategy that counters the traditional subjective/objective binary and reflects feminist concerns regarding the political value of personal experience in structures of knowledge."[136] I cannot divorce my writing from my situatedness, since I have always firmly believed that writing is interiority made tangible. Ultimately though, my understanding of my own queerness comes as a result of grief, and thus so does my desire to disidentify with the pharmacopornographic mode of capitalism which wants to see me reduced to a binary. While I have always been nonbinary, I can pinpoint the moment where I began to accept this truth as reality. Imbued with the authority of a certain performative speech act, I officiated the wedding of my best friend in May of 2018, and four months later I served as one of her pallbearers. Annie is buried in section O2 of Park Lawn Cemetery, which I am sure she finds hysterical considering the fact that it was a lung infection that brought her there. Prior to her passing, Annie opted to be buried in a shroud that releases mushroom spores through her body as she decomposes. These spores have transformed her body into an underground fungal garden, with the mushrooms communicating and transferring minerals through a vast mycorrhizal network. Thus, it would be

[136] Margaret G. Frohlich, "Lesbian Desire and (Dis)Identification in [Paul] Preciado's 'Testo Yonqui,'" *Letras Femeninas* 36, no. 1 (2010): 124. As was the case with the Ricky Tucker interview, I have again replaced Preciado's name out of respect, but I leave the trace of dead things in square brackets.

somewhat reductive to say that Annie is dead, as she persists as a living collection of mycelium and nutrients. Annie's treatment of her demise was an epistemological shattering, since if the seemingly sacred binary between life and death could be disrupted, no binary seems infallible. Thus, in the face of Annie's self-reformation as a mushroom thing, I began to accept my own nonbinary identity. While grieving my best friend, I find joy in a burgeoning willingness to accept my queer subjectivity. All of my queer performatives and creations, this thesis included, are the result of a deep grief and joy for the friendship I share with Annie.

Paul Preciado's project seems to be similarly indebted to grief following the passing of a close friend, yet there is also a hesitancy to accept this loved one as simply dead. *Testo Junkie* begins with Preciado being informed over the phone that their close friend, Guilliame Dustan, a radical queer writer in his own right, has died. In the immediate aftermath of receiving this news, during the "same day, a few hours later, [Preciado] put[s] a fifty-milligram dose of Testogel on [his] skin, so that [he] can begin to write this book. […] [He] do[es] it to avenge your death."[137] Preciado conjures Dustan into the present, by writing this early chapter as if it was being addressed to his friend in the present, as if he might be able to read it. Preciado imbues the reader of *Testo Junkie* with the spirit of his lost friend, for by situating Dustan as the "you" this section is speaking to, he lives within the reader. In fact, the only way the reader is able to read *Testo Junkie* is if they become Dustan, since "[y]ou're the only one who could read this book."[138] Thus, the way Dustan is alive in the present of *Testo Junkie* is twofold, as they come alive in the audience for the text, but also Preciado desires to resuscitate Dustan through the entirety of his endocrinological play. There is almost an element of self-sacrifice in the way Preciado initially

[137] *Testo Junkie*, 16.
[138] Ibid, 19.

describes their experiments with testosterone, as he writes about a desire to "[d]esign an image of [him]self as if [he] were you. *Do you in drag*. Cross-dress into you. Bring you back to life with this image."[139] The emphasis on the doing of Dustan in drag is Preciado's, and does not only suggest a performative framing of the self as Dustan, but also a countersexual erotic encounter. It is in this section of *Testo Junkie*, during the same day Preciado begins mourning his friend, that he films that ritualized testosterone administration and self-penetration described in my second chapter. While a tad necrophillic, Preciado's pairing of testosterone's application with the subversive display of queer sexuality is about more than disrupting the pharmacopornographic regime's grasp on a subject's sexuality and gender; it involves a simple desire for a deceased friend to still have access to queer pleasures. All this is to say that for both Preciado and myself, the desire to create a testament to our disidentifactory practices emerge from not only grief, but also a desire to honour the queer family we have lost and transform with them in mind and in our hearts.

The project that Preciado engages in through *Testo Junkie* is undeniably one of disidentification, as he takes the materials offered by the pharmacopornographic regime and illegally appropriates them to navigate the world in new non-normative ways. Preciado is very much aware of the disidentifications at work, and makes reference to Muñoz's work in a couple instances throughout his writing. In one instance, Preciado recalls attending a drag king workshop lead by the legendary drag artist Diane Torr, which sparks a

> shared gender suspicion [that] provokes a subjective shift that […] José Muñoz […] called "disidentification." The drag king workshop doesn't begin with dressing or making up our face to look like a man, but in becoming aware of the cultural orthopedics that construct everyday femininity, and by disidentifying from the normative nature of politically assigned gender.[140]

[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid, 366.

Preciado's reference to the workshop as a disidentification practice is significant, as it is reflective of how Torr approaches the pedagogy. Included in Gabriel Baur's documentary, *Venus Boyz*, is footage of Torr leading one of her classes, where she says that while in drag, "when [she] walk[s], [she] ha[s] a sense of ownership, a sense of belonging so that with each foot that [she] take[s, there is] a sense that [she] could own that piece of floor for the minute that [her] foot rests there."[141] Thus, Torr demonstrates that drag kinging is a lot more than simply acting, but is instead about negotiations with a world that often rejects queer bodies. Torr's project is disidentifactory as she wants queer bodies to not only exist in the violent public sphere, but to take up space within it and demand that people bear witness, complicating claims to dominance. Torr asks for assuredness in identity and subjectivity in those who take her class, as their queer bodies begin to claim the world as theirs, with Preciado noting that once "the participants have succeeded in constructing a masculine fiction that is sufficiently convincing and commonplace, they can confront the 'naturalistic' gender ecology in the outside world."[142] For Preciado, the workshop succeeds in altering not only the participants who engage in normative behaviors of masculinity, but also participates in what Muñoz identifies as disidentification's capacity for "making a queerworld,"[143] as contained in the workshops is "a ritual dimension, a psychopolitical magic in the drag king workshop and its performative process of becoming."[144] Thus, it is clear that Preciado takes inspiration from what he learned as part of these workshops, and applies it to his own project of self-experimentation. As Preciado strives to be illegible under

[141] "Diane Torr Leads a Workshop," *Venus Boyz*, directed by Gabriel Baur (2001; Switzerland, First Run Features, 2002), Kanopy.
[142] *Testo Junkie*, 373.
[143] Muñoz, 25.
[144] *Testo Junkie*, 369.

the pharmacopornographic eye, he imagines a world where many others follow suit, leading to a collapse of capitalistic control over personal subjectivities.

As Preciado's subjectivity is reformed by testosterone supplements, the disidentifactory practice leads him to not only become illegible to the pharmacopornographic regime, but also obscured within personal narratives. Preciado writes:

> I don't recognize myself. Not when I'm on T, or when I'm not on T. I'm neither more nor less myself. Contrary to the Lacanian theory of the mirror state, according to which the child's subjectivity is formed when it recognizes itself for the first time in its specular image, political subjectivity emerges precisely when the subject does not recognize itself in its representation. It is fundamental not to recognize oneself. *Derecognition, disidentification is a condition for the emergence of the political as the possibility of transforming reality*.[145]

Thus, Preciado is not only disidentifying with the oppressive model of capitalism, but also with the subjectivity that the pharmacopornographic era initially pushed onto him. Rather than reading himself into the already non-normative categories that had been inscribed onto his queer body, Preciado conceives of himself as a sort of blank template, on which new queer worlds can be inscribed. In sacrificing the subjectivity that was unwanted in the first place for the creation of self fashioned in testosterone, Preciado "made up [his] mind to disidentify [him]self. […] [He] lost the privilege of social invisibility and gender impunity […] The crossing demands losses, but these losses are the requirement for the ability to invent freedom."[146] Preciado's new subjectivity is unrecognizable to himself, precisely because prior to his illegal self-experimentation, he had no way of viewing any potential outside a totalizing pharmacopornographic paradigm. Further, for Muñoz, "rejection of these notions of the self is not simply an individualistic rebellion: resisting dominant modes of subjection entails not only

[145] Ibid, 397. Emphasis mine.
[146] *Uranus*, 36-37.

contesting dominant modalities of governmental and state power but also opening up a space for new social formations."[147] A significant amount of *Testo Junkie* grants space to these 'new social formations,' as Preciado often returns to the way in which testosterone shifts and accentuates his queer sexuality and inclinations. Preciado's weaving together of theory and historical criticism with personal accounts and experiments in *Testo Junkie* then does not only serve to disidentify with conventional 'structures of knowledge,' but also illustrates how "[d]isidentification is a point of departure, a process, a building […] This building takes place *in the future and the present*, which is to say that disidentifactory performance offers a utopian blueprint for a possible future, while […] staging a new political formation in the present."[148] Preciado's theory provides an explanation for the necessity of his project, while the actual stories of fucking and of 'queering the body' lead to an image of pharmacopornographic collapse, since "it is through the transformative powers of queer sex and sexuality that a queer world is made."[149] These stories humanize Preciado, and contextualize him as a desiring body whose capacity for pleasure extends beyond the reach of the pharmacopornographic. Preciado demonstrates that he is capable of pleasure, yes, but also pain, experiencing heart breaks and grief, and reveals all this on the page.

Preciado is incapable of continuing the ruse of a pharmacopornographic myth on his body, and thus he contends that the project emerges from desperation. Preciado disidentifies with the pharmacopornographic regime because his survival is dependent on it, and he

> hope[s] you will no longer have the strength to reiterate the norm, no longer have the energy to fabricate identity, to lose faith in what your identity documents say about you. And once you've lost all courage, weary with joy, [he] hope[s] you will invent other and unknown uses of your body. Because [he] loves you, [he]

[147] Muñoz, 145.
[148] Ibid, 200.
[149] Ibid, 23.

> desire[s] you to be weak and contemptible. Because fragility, and not courage, is what brings about revolution.[150]

I return then again to the fragility of the queer body, the precarity of the form, and the grief that marks both Preciado's and I's early awareness of transness. In a stroke that is extremely reminiscent of Nancy's relationality, Butler writes "[t]he boundary of who I am is the boundary of the body, but the boundary of the body never fully belongs to me. Survival depends less on the established boundary to the self than on the constitutive sociality of the body."[151] In the death of the other, my own finitude is revealed for Nancy, but nothing is truly lost as my relationality extends throughout different times. For Butler, however, there is more of a sense of fixedness rooted in "the fact that the body finds its survivability in social space and time."[152] Thus, I cannot help but wonder if the death of people I love means I stop surviving for moments of time. Preciado is correct and I am exhausted. However, I think of Preciado's fragility as an openness, a giving of permission for those who have died to find solace in the cracks in my skin. Giving ghosts a home is the other use of my body which I invent, and thus their hauntings queer my body further. I never could tell if she was joking, but Annie asked that one day we eat the mushrooms that give her shape and may one day break through the surface of the earth. I picture a warm and nourishing soup. What will happen then as I welcome you back into my body? *Testo Junkie* ends with the burial of Dustan. I must confess, Dustan, I have never read any of your work, despite having thumbed through a used collection containing three of your novels in Wee Book Inn on Whyte Avenue for twelve seventy-five. I regret not purchasing that text then, but I still disagree with some of your thinking, as Preciado wrote "[q]ueer politics as you understood it

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[150] *Uranus*, 99-100.
[151] *Frames of War*, 54.
[152] Ibid, 55.

was nothing other than a preparation for death."[153] There really is no way to prepare for loss, so I offer a quiet suggestion in the direction of your grave, queer politics as a giving of meaning to death. Not a justification of death, but an acknowledgement that in death we find comfort in each other's arms and that makes us stronger.

I have already discussed at length the shape that the dead take in Ron Athey's strange church, but I contest that Athey also uses his body to house the innumerable lives lost to the crisis he bore witness to. With each wound he gives himself, I picture a new spirit settling down kept warm by his leaking blood, for through performance he maintains his status as a self-described "living 'dead' body."[154] Thus, Athey's queer corpse subjectivity is the result of melancholy for the unknowable and innumerable dead, as Butler writes that Freudian melancholia "is the congealment of a history of loss, the sedimentation of relations of substitution over time, the resolution of a tropological function into the ontological effect of the self."[155] Athey's alignment with the dead is itself a mode of disidentification, insofar as he allows for the victims of AIDS/HIV to continue to engage with the public sphere with his body as a vessel. Since disidentification is a process which occurs 'in the future and the present,' Athey's performance "refuses to allow aids to be relegated to the past, instead insisting on leaving that wound open (even erotically so) in its denial of closure."[156] Athey then joins Preciado and myself in a refusal to allow those who have passed away to be simply dead and inert. Be it in Preciado's desire to 'do Dustan in drag' or my own willingness to consume Annie as mushroom, the three of us seek to unify our subjectivity with those of our loved ones who are

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[153] *Testo Junkie*, 417.
[154] Dominic Johnson, "Perverse Martyrologies: An Interview with Ron Athey," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 18, no. 4 (2008): 513.
[155] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjugation* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 169.
[156] Westengard, 132.

no longer present. It is clear then how melancholy is inextricable from disidentification, as "it is a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names."[157] Preciado conjures his friend in the battle against pharmacopornographic dominance, and within Athey's battles "what it means to 'carry' (a virus, a memory, another body) and what it means to carry on (to bear the unbearable) are at stake."[158] In Athey's highlighting of his body's fragility and malleability, he allows for the dead—who he loves and never knew—to be visible. Thus, it is clear then how Athey situates grief as a positive manifestation, since through his performances, Athey is able "to embrace seemingly limitless death, decay, and negativity as a means of creating a queer temporality bridging past, present, and future."[159] Those Athey mourns are not confined only to his form, and instead operate like a sort of parasite, burrowing deep into anyone who witnesses them. Athey implants the dead in the spectator "with his queer, leaky body. He materializes the possibility that the melancholic incorporation might in fact ooze back out of the opened flesh, a return that (like a haunting) holds our mouths to the breast of the lost other and asks us to drink in their return."[160] While Annie only asked her friends to eat her, Athey wants for everyone who bears witness to him to consume those whose legacies are contained beneath the surface of his skin. This force feeding is disidentifactory precisely because in becoming what you eat, the spectator's subjectivity is imbued with the vast potentiality of queer life that has been lost.

Further, because of the brutality at the core of Athey's work, his work disidentifies with the majoritarian sphere because there is no clear measure for how the audience is meant to react

[157] Muñoz, 74.
[158] Heathfield, 221.
[159] Westengard, 138.
[160] Ibid, 136.

to the sight of a sick and queer body in pain. For Muñoz, this "ambivalence brings about a certain 'shock effect' […] which is, in a striking way, structurally akin to the inner workings of melancholia."[161] As Muñoz identifies a structural sameness between disidentification and melancholia, it is safe to say that this shock is also not unlike disidentification. Or perhaps it is better to say that shock is already included in disidentification, as "disidentification is an ambivalent structure of feeling that works to retain the problematic object and tap into the energies that are produced by contradictions and ambivalences."[162] However, it is not the shock that Athey is interested in, which further strengthens the sense of ambivalence that the audience feels. The shock is almost corollary to the occurrences on stage, as "Athey stresses he is not interested in 'shock' […] but in 'generosity', in giving what is usually withheld from public view."[163] Therein lies the true disidentifactory capability of Athey's work, as he does not want to stupefy or merely disturb an audience, he simply wants to present plainly the truth of his queer life. Again, Athey's sickness and the sickness that spreads through people he loves is extremely prescient, as he places it on display as an undeniable truth of the world. While there was no risk that his audience would be infected by HIV+ blood in performance like many news outlets report, the audience is still infected with the image of a queer sick body in pain. Thus, while Athey's artistic career takes a hit after being targeted by the right-wing populace, specifically Jesse Helms, he does become more of a widespread presence throughout the United States as a figure of controversy. Be it as a scapegoat, villain, martyr, or specter of the damned, Athey appears on

> national stages to appear to various publics, including a mass public and the minoritized counterpublics […]. [He] also decided to combat the neoconservative strategy of relegating

[161] Muñoz, 70.
[162] Ibid, 71.
[163] "The Political Potential of Upsetting Art," 156.

> a public health emergency to privatized individual illness. Practicing a public ethics of self, [he] thematized and theatricalized [his] illness as public spectacles,[164]

like the figures of Magic Johnson and Pedro Zamora who Muñoz discusses. Athey then places AIDS in the mouths of those who choose to ignore it, as he denies the narrative that HIV/AIDS is a private queer phenomenon, and is instead a public issue that people cannot look away from, no matter how sick the sight of Athey's blood makes them. As Athey stages dramatized and ritualized reformations of personal instances from his own biography, he does much more than read himself into the majoritarian sphere, he forces other subjects to read his suffering into a dominant narrative that would see his queer, sick body excluded.

Admittedly, I have less to say about the role of mourning in Emma Frankland's work, which is not to say that the performances included in *None of Us is Yet a Robot* are devoid of grief, rather that grief is so a part of contemporary trans experience that it does not need to be explicitly discussed here. Grief always resides below the surface. Grief frames the queer body. As such, the introduction to her collection of theatrical works is already indicative of Frankland's disidentifactory push. Surrounding the introductory text to Frankland's book is a timeline of events, tracking not only Frankland's development of her work, but also historical and political happenings of potential significance to queer and trans subjectivities, for instance, "2013 Teacher Lucy Meadows commits suicide after a smear campaign. Development continues on *Language*. The first Trans Pride Brighton takes place."[165] These histories wrap around the page and cradle Frankland's words, pointing to the moments that not only inform her artistic practice but also inform her political sensibility of transness. While she does not discuss the harassment faced by Meadows, Frankland's inclusion of this event in the framing of her introduction situates her solo

[164] Muñoz, 151.
[165] Frankland, 7-8.

performances within the context of a series of trans pain and grief. Meadows is just one of the many trans people who are murdered by the words of those who reject an honest subjectivity. Further, since Muñoz writes that "[t]o disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment […] that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject,"[166] Frankland is disidentifying through the framing of her introduction, as she is quite literally reading (and writing) events of personal import into a timeline of events within the majoritarian sphere that concern her body. And there is an inkling of hope as Frankland pairs "the first time [she] speak[s] publicly about being trans [with] California becomes the first US state to ban 'trans panic' as a legal defense" in 2014.[167] Ultimately, Frankland's practice and life are framed as work of disidentification, precisely because she is unashamedly herself and consistently makes the fact of her transness known. For Muñoz, "to perform queerness is to constantly disidentify, to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly 'line up.'"[168] I fundamentally agree with Muñoz here, and I am truthfully quite bitter about that fact. My bitterness does not stem from Muñoz's claim itself, but the necessity of it. While I recognize that this body of mine is political in so many different ways, Frankland and I both yearn for the day where that politic does not manifest in the form of a debate and a lack of belonging. Frankland's framing of her work with these narratives remind me that we queers have to find comfort and joy in the grief, because it is one of the only consistent homes we have.

There are many disidentifactory aspects within the work that Frankland describes in *None of Us is Yet a Robot*, from illustrations that cement themselves in the majoritarian sphere in "Doodle" to the feverish queer world that is constructed in "Hearty," but the piece I find myself

[166] Muñoz, 12.
[167] Frankland, 11.
[168] Muñoz, 78.

returning to with frequency is "Rituals for Change." Despite "Rituals" being concerned with a refusal to boil transness down to a single moment of change, it itself does signify a significant departure in Frankland's methodology, for "*Rituals* marked a shift for [Frankland] and [her] performance – from asking a cis audience for recognition and acceptance to sharing something of [her]self."[169] Unlike "Language" or "Doodle," where Frankland is almost trying to saturate the world with an understanding of transness, "Rituals for Change" is a performance with Frankland's specific trans subjectivity at the heart of it. At the core of "Rituals" is the notion that all things are in constant fluctuation, fluid and malleable, Frankland demonstrates with her performative rituals that "[w]e all possess an interior, a full and fascinating interior life that is constantly moving. There are tides inside of us – oceans of change. Seas in constant ebb and flow. I am familiar with change. We are familiar with change."[170] If Preciado laid the groundwork by manifesting himself as 'blank template' on which queer worlds can develop, then Frankland's "performances *transport* the performer *and* the spectator to a vantage point where transformation and politics are imaginable."[171] Especially since Frankland returns to Preciado as a sort of guiding light throughout *None of Us is Yet a Robot*, she highlights the fact that the transformative politics wherein people have freedom to share and develop their own subjectivities has begun. Frankland illustrates then that it is not a hindrance that we have yet to achieve a total construction of a queer world, since all people and subjectivities are themselves 'incomplete' insofar as we are constantly changing. She leaves audiences with hope that not only is change possible, but it is unavoidable, and thus she "connote[s] *process*, which is exactly how

[169] Frankland, 114.
[170] Ibid, 134.
[171] Muñoz, 196.

the *process* of disidentification should be understood."[172] Thus, I consider "Rituals for Change" to be the most radical of Frankland's performances, as her work is a threat to the pharmacopornographic regime and all systems that want to see minoritarian subjects demarcated. Frankland's work is a reminder to the most prejudiced subjects that even their own bodies and subjectivities are unstable. As discussed previously, Frankland is adamant through "Rituals" that "[t]he radical act is to exist."[173] In this visibility, we will continue to mold a queer world in our image. I look forward to bearing witness to this continuous and eventual transformation. I am thankful for this inevitability and pure potentiality.

It should be noted that while Claude Cahun's art is largely known for counter-identifying with a violent regime, and not disidentifying with it, I maintain that, especially in their early work, Cahun's work contains intense disidentifactory properties. Cahun had contributed work to the *Mercure de France*, which had, for a period of time, fellow gender deviant Rachilde on its editing committee. There are a number of parallels between Cahun and Rachilde, but I cannot help but notice the way in which these two figures relate to their reflections, with mirrors being a prominent symbol in Rachilde's *Crystal Spider* and so much of Cahun's work. For instance, Cahun writes of a "[m]irror, that seems more cruel to [them] the more [they] burn and which refuses [them] the comfort of [their] reflection."[174] The significance of these two figures who frequently return to their own image reflected back to them is not lost on me, because I understand what it is to see a self reflected that is at times incommensurable with your own subjectivity. Thus, I turn to a writing initially published as excerpts in *Mercure de France*, where Cahun takes up the gendered subjectivity of significant female figures throughout history. In

[172] Ibid, 42.
[173] Frankland, 124 & 151.
[174] *Disavowals*, 144.

"Heroines," Cahun's project is one of disidentification, as the text is composed of monologues by these prominent women with "these dark, often perverse texts [that] explore the mindscapes of women trapped against their will within the web of history."[175] For instance, Cahun's iteration of the Virgin Mary is in an unhappy relationship with Joseph and frustrated with Jesus' flock for claiming that they love him more than she does. Cahun grants the women more modern sensibilities and concerns, as initially the Virgin Mary's "neighbor, taking pity on [her], wanted [her] to have an abortion.—But where? How to manage it? Faced with [Mary's] need, she remained dumfounded; [Mary] was a monster, in [her] place she would have gone mad."[176] Cahun's monologues effectively instill agency into figures who are often denied them through the narratives around them, from Eve, to Helen of Troy, and Goethe's Marguerite. Conversely though, Cahun highlights how these figures often lack that same agency in the language that circulates around their feminine bodies in contrast to Cahun's narratives. Thus, Cahun effectively takes up a "process of disidentification [which] scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities."[177] Ultimately, I suggest that Cahun's "Heroines" allows for audiences of the time, who have had their agency denied to varying degrees, to read themselves into a patriarchal history, as Cahun displays the displeasure of historical and cultural figures who are often diminished in contrast to masculine figures. Further, Cahun is allowing their own frustrations to saturate the worlds and the minds of the figures they take up, using them as a mouthpiece for their more contemporary struggles.

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[175] Rice, 23.
[176] Claude Cahun, "Heroines," trans. Norman MacAfee in *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*, ed. Shelley Rice (London: MIT Press, 1999), 66.
[177] Muñoz, 31.

While I am not sure of the totality of who or what Cahun grieves, their artworks are certainly steeped with mourning, which is in part directed towards themself. Throughout their work, there is a sense that Cahun is grieving for themself, that, like Athey, they are already a living corpse. It is certainly true that in their photography, Cahun performs "within the purview of an apparatus of perspectival looking that freezes the body *as* representation and so—as absence, as always already dead—in intimate relation to lack and loss."[178] Yet, Cahun heightens this notion by appearing corpse-like in much of their self-portraiture, be it a 1914 work which calls to mind the image of a body waiting to be autopsied (Figure 3.), or 1939 photograph where they resemble a body adorned with commemorative flowers (Figure 4.). Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to say that Cahun seems to be aware of the fact that they are dead presently, and it is their art which grieves them, as Cahun writes that "[w]e can still be judged in our absence. […] The long and newly dead (in other words: the dead and the living) fraternize."[179] I argue then that Cahun's art is not only a reclamation of their own subjectivity, but their death itself, and consequently, their legacy as well. For trans bodies, there is a universal nightmare—a tombstone memorializing the wrong name, marking the spot where someone is buried in the wrong clothes. While this is a cruelty that did befall Cahun, they still manage to preserve their queer subjectivity's legacy through their writing and self-portraiture which are filled with gendered subversions, as they offer an immortal image of who they are. Muñoz writes that "in the case of portraiture a lost object is captured and (re)produced, and in melancholic mourning the object is resurrected and retained,"[180] yet in Cahun's case, these practices are one and the same. Cahun reproduces themself into the present moment on their terms, and as their art provides a model of

[178] Amelia Jones, "The 'Eternal Return': Self-Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment," *Signs* 27, no. 4 (2002): 949.
[179] *Disavowals*, 139-140.
[180] Muñoz, 65.

a self to be mourned, the spectator wonders how they will be mourned in turn. Amelia Jones writes:

> Cahun's blissed-out face in the c. 1939 self-portrait is a face of internalized pleasure made visible to others. This is the paradox of photographic self-portraiture. It simultaneously, tantalizingly, both gives and takes the subject from us […], a mode that will also promote an acceptance of the inevitability of death that underlies our every anxious attempt to project otherness outward.[181]

Thus, while Cahun's work commemorates them in a much more meaningful way than a grave with the wrong name, it also signifies the precarity of minoritarian subjects. Cahun makes use of the "photograph's capacity to mark the death of the subject; in so doing, they paradoxically open this subject to the 'life' of memory and the interpretive exchange, marking selfhood as otherness in a potentially productively destabilizing way."[182] Ultimately then, be it through the performance of otherness, the creation of queer worlds through a camera lens, or the conjuring of their self into a present moment, Cahun's work is intensely disidentifactory. Through their art, Cahun ensures that they will always be grieved, and thus they will always matter.

Ultimately, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun's work which disidentify with these systems that threaten their unique queer subjectivities are all brimming with this deep sense of grief. However, this grief is filled with a hopefulness as the artists are positioned towards a queer future, saturated with love for the lost. Athey imbues his own body with the innumerable spirits of those struck down during the AIDS crisis, and transmits these ghouls into those who bear witness him, so that they may carry the lost in turn. Frankland frames her work with the tragic demises of our transgender siblings, and reads this loss

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[181] "'Eternal Return,'" 972.
[182] Ibid, 975

into an account of historically meaningful events, since each of their lives and deaths are in fact significant. Cahun disidentifies with not only the cultural moment they live through by offering alternative, agentic images of canonized women, but also disidentifies with their own legacy. By immortalizing themself in photographs which present an image of a seemingly dead self, Cahun is able to anticipate and circumvent how they will be remembered, as they grieve their subjectivity on their own terms. Each of these artist survives and composes beautiful and radical works by acquainting themselves with the rhythms of their own disappearances,[183] and in turn grief becomes more comforting and warm.

As I end this chapter, I am reflecting again on how Preciado begins and ends *Testo Junkie*, with the discovery that a friend has passed and the subsequent burial. It has been four years since Annie passed, and I think I remember that it was raining when she died, but truthfully I am less sure now. The sky opened up for her in the night, and that morning I was in somewhat of a daze. I wandered to a barber shop nearby called The Man Cave, this was perhaps the last gasp of my male subjectivity dying alongside Annie. I think it was a decent haircut, and I am certain that it was warm and sunny during the burial. I never told Annie that I am nonbinary to her face, I have only whispered it to the mushrooms in hopes that they would pass on my message. I know she would be proud, and would give me a massive hug if she could. But she cannot. Instead, I imagine that her mushrooms speak out, use their tiny words to create a bright world in greyscale. A world

[183] At Annie's wedding, I befriended a Quaker, June-Etta (GG for short), who has since become something like a grandparent to me. She is currently in her early 80s, and spends as much time as she can as a volunteer to provide palliative and end of life care. She once voiced her motivation behind this as a desire to acquaintance herself to the rhythms of her own disappearance, and thus the above notion is in reference to her and all the wisdom and kindness she has shared with me.

where there are no opposites, where there is safety, acceptance, and comfort in fluidity. I hope that this thesis is a small step in the formation of that queer world.

Five: A Final Moment for Beautiful Things

Artificial bloom
Hydroponic skin
Chemical release
Synthesize the real
Plastic surgery
Social dialect
Positive results
Documents of life

SOPHIE, "Faceshopping"

As I write this, it has been exactly a month since the public announcement that Queen Elizabeth passed away. At the risk of sounding callous, I could not even pretend to feel saddened by the loss of this monarch who served as an emblem for colonial rule. In truth, there have only ever been two celebrity deaths which had any sort of impact on me. The first was Robin Williams, who I always loved growing up. I was 15 when he passed, and I think I took his death to be indicative of some sort of loss of childhood innocence. But of course, he was in truth a stranger, and the weight of his loss on me pales in comparison to the deaths of people who have been much closer to me. That being said, I had even less exposure to a celebrity whose passing truly hurt me, as I could only name a small handful of Sophie's songs at the time of the artist's death. Nevertheless, when I heard that Sophie fell from a roof while trying to get a better view of the full moon, my heart broke. There is such cruelty in a trans person being killed simply for desiring beauty. As I sit and write, I have some of Cahun's photographs next to me, and I feel almost overwhelmed by the form and the expressiveness. Over the course of this thesis, I have examined and dissected some of the massive political potential contained in the art of Paul Preciado, Ron Athey, Emma Frankland, and Claude Cahun, but I have overlooked the simple

beauty that their artistry contains. From the poeticism of some of Preciado's prose to the graceful choreography and striking images of Athey's performance, and from the tender theatricality of Frankland's work to the sheer lyricism in Cahun's writing and virtuosity to their more visual art, there is such eloquence to the radical pieces I have discussed over the course of the last several chapters. Moreover, there is something in and of itself inherently political to queer bodies creating beautiful works within a world that rejects them to begin with. Despite all the ugliness and violence that the pharmacopornographic regime contains, I would be remiss if I did not take a final moment to acknowledge all the beautiful and lovely things that this world contains.

Through this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate how queer individuals have used various performative tactics to reconstruct and reclaim their sexual and gendered subjectivities from a pharmacopornographic model of capitalism, and thus have undermined that paradigm's claim to legitimacy. To support my claim, I turned to the work of four creatives who operate using extremely different artistic mediums, yet all still take up their body as a canvas on which to work. My first chapter introduced my own body, subjectivity, and form as a means to demonstrate how I, like countless other queer subjects, have been demarcated by the discursive power structures at play. I also spoke about how I myself have taken up performative utterances as a means to navigate a prejudiced public and find safety in language. From there, I touched briefly on each of the artists and theorists whose work composes and informs my writing here. My second chapter explored what Paul Preciado means as he discusses the pharmacopornographic and some of the concepts contained in it, such as *potentia gaudendi*. From there, I discussed the rituals and processes of normalization that occur in the art of Ron Athey, Emma Frankland, and Claude Cahun, paying particular attention to how each artist plays with the notion of being monstrous. At the core of this chapter was an examination of how each

artist utilizes the fact of their physical form in performance to disrupt the hold that the pharmacopornographic regime has on queer bodies. In the third chapter, I sought to salvage the notion of community, as its prevalence in today's rhetoric suggests a risk that the word will lose its meaning. I summarized some of Jean-Luc Nancy's ideas surrounding community rooted in a notion of being singular plural. Then, I discussed the Nancean implications within the work of Preciado, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun, after discussing why the only possible community is a queer one. However, this chapter demonstrates the incommensurability of community with the pharmacopornographic regime, and thus I position the artists as evidence that the totalizing narrative that the pharmacopornographic touts is demonstrably false. Finally, I discuss in the fourth chapter the disidentifactory elements at play in the work of these artists, and discuss queer relationships with grief as being another mark of disidentification processes against a pharmacopornographic regime. This chapter also cements my own identity and the work that I produce as being interwoven with a process of mourning, while also situating and locating the deep pools of grief that motivate Preciado, Athey, Frankland, and Cahun. Ultimately, the chapter is meant to be a gesture of gratitude to all the people who we have come to know, love, and lose.

By examining the performative works of Athey, Frankland, and Cahun against the backdrop of different periods where the desire for a pharmacopornographic immanence is pronounced, I have demonstrated that resistance against totalizing forces for the reclamation of a queer subjectivity is always a tactic that works to deny normative claims of dominance. While this thesis is a small step to create a queer world, it is a crucial one, as we are only moving deeper into a pharmacopornographic regime, where our lives are becoming progressively more entwined with the technologies that produce us. As there is an ever-present danger in living as our queer selves in this capitalist model, I have offered examples in which artists have taken the

materiality of the body and reclaimed it from this system that relies on their co-option. Moreover, I have demonstrated that escaping the pharmacopornographic dominance is not a question of desire, but of necessity, for if we continue as we have, there can be no true community or knowledge of the self. By analyzing the work of artists in different time periods, I have demonstrated the escalation of the pharmacopornographic control over subjects. Thus, by offering theoretical interrogations with these artists, I have also shown the evolution in responses to this crisis. This is especially true for the work of Emma Frankland, not only because she is explicitly responding to her subjection in a contemporary pharmacopornographic crisis, but because there have not previously been academic investigations of her theatre on this scale. Finally, by highlighting my personal resistances to and performative rituals against the pharmacopornographic regime, I show that this reclamation of the self can be a simple every day practice, and is not always a grand, sweeping gesture that may entail further threat to an already vulnerable population.

Given the scope of the pharmacopornographic and the prevalence of queer resistance, it would be impossible to speak to all the artists who struggle against this model by using performative forces and by taking up their corporeal form. Artists whose work falls within the project I have been describing include Cassils, Rachel MacLean, Mireille Eid, Taylor Mac, ORLAN, Carolee Schneeman, Del LaGrace Volcano, Wafaa Bilal, Stelarc, Tim Miller, Marina Abramović, Goddess Bunny, Nina Arsenault, AA Bronson, Revital Cohen, Tuur Van Balen, La Pocha Nostra, Vaginal Davis, Bob Flanagan, Rocío Boliver, Frank B, and countless others whose art threatens a pharmacopornographic dominance. From a theoretical standpoint, I wanted to also discuss Gerald Vizenor's conception of survivance, but it ultimately felt inappropriate to discuss this in relation to a group of predominantly white artists, and Giorgio Agamben's notion of *homo*

sacer, but this too felt fraught considering his disappointing stance on public well-being in the face of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, I would have also wanted to spend some time discussing the role of the internet and processes of mediatization, which also exert some sort of agency onto all subjectivities within the pharmacopornographic regime.

While nothing is set in stone, I will speak briefly to the next steps of my practice. From an academic standpoint, I will spend the next year researching various PhD programs with the intent of starting for the Fall of 2024. I am unsure if I will be looking to continue a pursuit in drama, pivot to gender studies, or perhaps something else entirely. With regards to my creative practice, I am currently in conversation with Calgary's One Yellow Rabbit about *The Immaculate Perfection of F**king and Bleeding in the Gender Neutral Bathroom of an Upper-Middle Class High School* appearing as part of the 2024 High Performance Rodeo. Beyond that, I am currently in the early stages of developing a new play, a ghost story which concerns the intersection of queer subjectivities and Jewish, intergenerational trauma following the Shoah. The play revolves around the annual reunion of a group of siblings and their respective partners, as they navigate the dysfunction and harm brought on by a difficult childhood. In Judaism, there is a tradition with babies where they are named after loved ones who have passed away, and thus my play will contrast this notion of a dead name with how dead names are made manifest amongst the trans community. The youngest family member was initially named after one of their siblings who passed away shortly before they were born, and thus when they transition with a new name, they shed a lot of the expectations and grief placed on them by their parents. I feel myself, both in my personal life and artistic work, making hauntological turns, as I recognize that the political landscape and the conditions of bodies within have changed so drastically over the last several years.

Perhaps this is why I need to return to a desire for beauty. While I can feel the beginning of the pharmacopornographic paradigm's destabalizing, it feels at times that the discourse and language that surrounds our queer subjectivities are only getting more brutal. Within the pharmacopornographic regime, there is seldom time for queer creations and subjectivities to be anything other than political. And while notions of beauty are without a doubt political as well, it is a gift to be able to enjoy the lovely things that queer subjectivties have contributed to the world, despite the harm and pain that their creations and their bodies are in relation to. Despite processes of demarcation, I feel so joyful for the queer subjects who continue to find and contribute to such grace and light in the world. Since Sophie died, the moon has seemed just a bit colder and a little more callous, yet it is just as luminous as it always has been.

I have seen the moon countless times, and it is still so beautiful.

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APPENDIX: Cahun Photographs

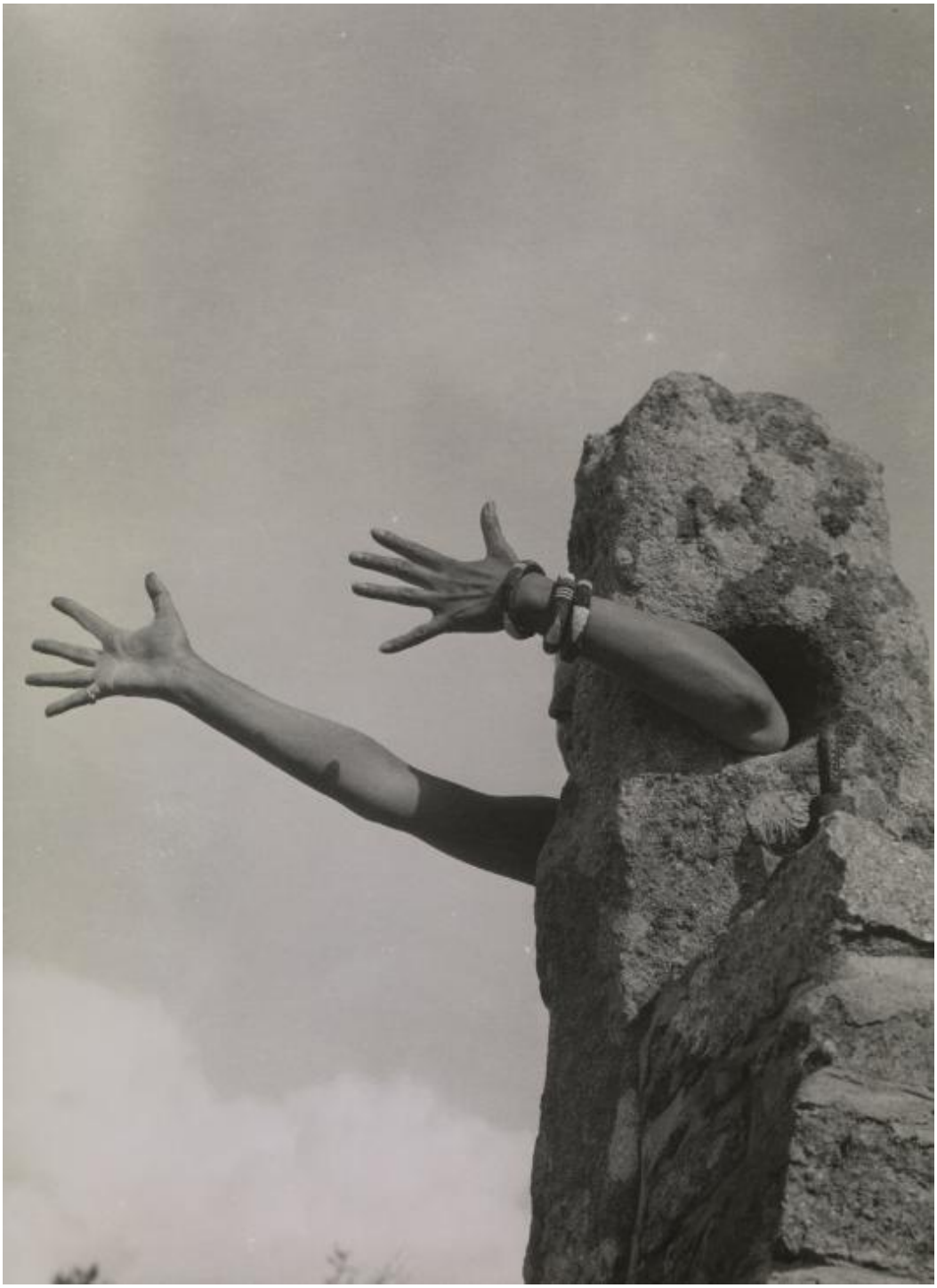

Figure 1. Claude Cahun, *Je Tends les Bras*, 1931-1932, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 240 x 150 mm, Tate, London, England.

Figure 2. Claude Cahun, *Self Portrait (With Shaved Head)*, 1920, photograph, 21 x 12.4 cm, Jersey Heritage Collections, Saint Helier, Jersey.

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Figure 4. Claude Cahun, *Self Portrait (Lying on Leopard Skin)*, 1939, photograph, 84 x 110 mm, Jersey Heritage Collections, Saint Helier, Jersey.