



# PHARMAKON, MY BECOMING-TOXIC

By

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## ***Introduction***

*Pharmakon, my Becoming-Toxic* is a transfeminist artwork mediated via a multi-channel audio/video projection-mapped installation, the form of which serves as an interactive display interrogating and confronting sociocultural narratives of *toxic sex*<sup>1</sup> and toxicity, specifically engaging with transsexual embodiment and its relation to media, health and “care”. I offer here an autotheoretical radical transfeminist

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<sup>1</sup> Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward <sup>2022</sup>.

media theory that is specific to my methods. By extrapolating sex-divergence as a potentiated site of corporeal, sociocultural and artistic mediation I develop a framework for understanding my own transsexual body as an entanglement of artistic medium and flesh, down to the microcellular level. The chemical messaging of hormone transition, the disruption of “sex” through technology and pollution, and the general toxicity of 21st century Earth are central interrogations of this effort.

The term “transsexual” is utilized herein as culturally recognizable shorthand for a categorization some may find contestable or problematic. “Transsexual” is culturally and medically defined yet cannot itself define a static category of trans existence; it functions primarily within a framework of the Western transnormative subject<sup>2</sup> to define a specific form-of-trans-life. A transsexual person alters their body to generate chosen secondary sex characteristics through an effort of calculated body modification techniques, utilizing technology such as exogenous hormones or plastic surgery. A transsexual body is permanently changed in this fashion and even highly normative practices of transsexuality carry unique social consequences depending on a given transsexual’s cultural background and transition outcomes. Many share the common experience of spending some or all of one’s life in a state of transition—a time where one cannot possibly meet gender expectations demanded by cissexual normativity—often experiencing extreme social precarity from this “trans maladjustment”<sup>3</sup>, or discordantly staying perpetually closeted—“pre-transition”—in agonizing dysphoria.

My transsexual experience is highlighted in this work because it is an embodied example of intentional sex disruption, and not because I claim any authority to speak for transsexuals in general. As an autotheorist, I find importance in establishing my transfeminism through play within the space of differentiation

between embodied expressions of transsexuality and more ephemeral, identity-driven or liberal expressions of trans-ness, such as transgender cissexuality. It is not my intention to exclude from my work or critique any subset of trans-ness, rather my intentions with this work are personal expression and therefore it deals primarily with my own transsexual body and is complicated by the politics and policies that surround and subsume my being. In the United States, the increasingly authoritarian home country from which I have fled, these politics have recently taken a drastic turn toward disallowing or even criminalizing trans existence in the public and medical spheres<sup>4</sup> marking the end-point of whatever shallow inclusions were achieved through the failed efforts of hegemonic liberal representational queer politics.

The history of choice in sex has been explored by several leading trans scholars and holds great significance in *Pharmakon*. Geertje Mak’s *Doubting Sex*<sup>5</sup> demonstrates 19th C. examples of intersex transsexual medical interventions and offers an elaborate analysis of the historical genesis of technological sex inscription and alteration. C. Riley Snorton, in his work *Black on Both Sides*<sup>6</sup>, offers an historical analysis of 19th C. Black gender divergence and the entanglement of transness with racial politics in America. Racist associations between sex divergence, gender, and Black fugitivity<sup>7</sup> developed alongside the creation of intersex medical interventions<sup>8</sup> which then developed into countless double-binds at the intersections of Black health and “care” in the United States and elsewhere. Medical interventions in sex disruption have created opportunities for intersex and transsexual people to physically modify their bodies to a shape and form they desire, while the same technology has also allowed for surgical interventions to be performed on intersex babies and children to forcibly conform their bodies to align with cissexual standards without their consent. Thus, whether the affinity of technological sex inscription is aligned with a

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<sup>2</sup>Awkward-Rich 2022 p.9.

<sup>3</sup>Awkward-Rich 2022

<sup>4</sup>Federal Register 2025.

<sup>5</sup>Geertje Mak 2012.

<sup>6</sup>C. Riley Snorton 2017.

<sup>7</sup>Snorton 2017. 55-97.

<sup>8</sup>Mak 2012. 43-65.

treatment of consent, through personal sovereignty, madness, pollution, and illness. My work investigates this relation as one with the toxic.

While transgender and gender-nonconforming people also utilize their bodies as expressive media through fashion and gender-expression; the transsexual experience contrasts by intentionally inscribing one's interior *and* exterior body; altering the endocrine system and the central nervous system; altering permanently the cellular makeup of one's body through medicinal, surgical or dietary interventions. The difference between the experience of a transsexual woman who feels a vital need to modify her body in order to remain alive and an externally defined, cissexual, transgender experience is notable because such externalized trans-ness can be shed in moments of need for gender opacity, while the external/internal transsexual body is irrevocably altered; that is, transsexuality inscribes *permanent, noticeable, and physical* changes to one's body, regardless of any efforts to detransition thereafter. Our bodies, permanently intelligible as trans, if maladjusted to our social environment through transition, become publicly communicative of our precarious positioning.<sup>9</sup>

An aesthetic treatment of transsexuality in *Pharmakon* is defined by *projection*, the piece is composed of projected light on plastic. I use projection-mapping in my artwork in a highly ironic sense; the social projection of Otherness is mirrored by projection-as-medium. The intangibility and temporary nature of light highlights the precarious nature of transitory periods, the surveillance camera within captures light and infrared radiation—highlighting our “era of trans hypervisibility”.<sup>10</sup> As queer artist Tyler Matheson notes in his review of the artist exhibition *Indiscernible thresholds, escaped veillances* in the Barnicke Gallery at University of Toronto, trans artists “evade extractive desires for trans bodies as evidence by offering, instead, invisibility.”<sup>11</sup> *Pharmakon* is an attempt to elaborate on transsexual bodily communication without using my body to communicate, an act of artistic opacity

and spatial severance between the my body and a piece which studies my body. The piece takes place after the extraction of my corporeality; my body becomes only a gruesome bleeding plastic tit—a metaphor for representationism.

While my work here deals with transsexual bodily communication, I question any conflation of transsexuality and radicality or social refusal without adequate social context. To quote Emmet Harsin Drager, “some types of body modification are made to reflect free will, critical thinking, and subversive politics while other types of body modification are made to symbolize indoctrination, false consciousness, and the status quo”<sup>12</sup> Transsexuals are not monolithic, we do not all share common goals, common politics, or a common consciousness. I absolutely question the idea that “transsexual” as a term can ever constitute a cohesive social class or subdivision of liberal trans identity. Many trans women have never had to turn tricks for rent. Some surely hold six figure salaries. Their life experiences are as foreign to me as mine would be to theirs. Thus, my work reflects only my own transsexual experience: one steeped in chronic violence and chronic illness, *consequences of transsexuality*. I was buoyed for most of my transition by an unchosen career in full-service sex work, going through motions of addiction, semi-homelessness, recovery, survival, and criminality. This is not an uncommon transfeminine experience; it is so often much worse for trans women of color targeted by the carceral state.<sup>13</sup>

Despite my reliance on technology for expression, *Pharmakon* is not a work appreciative of cyborgic feminism. Much like Andrea Long Chu and Emmet Harsin Drager<sup>14</sup>, I take issue with a format of trans studies emergent a brand of feminist studies inspired by Donna Haraway which draws strange parallels between the transsexual and technologic—using such nightmarish terminology as “techgender”—what I see as an ontological distancing of trans from “woman” and from “human”. I see such technologic positivist de-gendering of trans as a fetishistic flight

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<sup>9</sup>Awkward-Rich 2022.

<sup>10</sup>Jules Gill-Peterson. 2024.

<sup>11</sup>Tyler Matheson 2024.

<sup>12</sup>Chu and Drager 2019, 110.

<sup>13</sup>Dilara Yarbrough 2023.

<sup>14</sup>Chu and Drager 2019, 109-111.

of postfeminist fancy—divorced from precarious trans life and hyperbolic in nature. Foreclosing on such desolate futures that cis, liberal, and representational transgender studies/politics represent, my radical transfeminist intervention is to embrace the toxicity of the transsexual and the malignant, the maligned; I reject purity politics and assimilationist trans-ness, and seek a future where toxic sex and filthy queerness create new trajectories toward a precarity-aware feminist praxis aligned with the subaltern and the sick—where you find the sex working, disabled, racialized, unemployed, precarious, multiply-marginal trannies. Dismissing purity fetishism as the pursuit of a laughable impossibility of being for the 21st century is also an impetus driving *Pharmakon*. My toxicity is derived from the filth and chaos of a precarious transsexual life. I hold no interest in creating tech-heavy new-media artworks regarding transsexuality that do not reflect this; my work in multimedia and computer-dependent formats has more to do with my own multiplicity of media skills and artistic interests than any intent of conflation between trans and tech. To convey this through metaphor, I utilize materiality in counterpoint. Without the projector you have only a blank canvas, an empty body. What is projected onto the body is what is most often seen. Projection is an event; the piece only *becomes* the piece while light is being cast. The blank shell left without projection is naught but an assemblage of toxic plastics. Projection-mapping is a continuous reconfiguration of an object's appearance without reconfiguring its form. Rear-projection, shining the light through the material to project off the opposite surface internalizes this reconfiguration of light into the object during its brief tenure. Metaphor mixes with irony, sarcasm, and filth, cast in bleeding red light.

*Pharmakon* is most interested in my breasts, specifically the textured silicone implants installed within them. Textured breast implants, first implemented with a 2mm polyurethane foam coating, were meant to improve an implant's adherence within its "capsule", the web

of flesh that forms around the implant and adheres it to the implantee's body.<sup>15</sup> In 1991, over fears that this urethane lining could be carcinogenic, such surfacing was voluntarily recalled in the United States and, over time, manufacturers began texturing the silicone surfaces of the implants themselves.<sup>16</sup> 1997 saw the first reported case of breast-implant associated anaplastic large-cell lymphoma (BIA-ALCL), a form of cancer "uniquely iatrogenic in nature with indisputable evidence to its direct association with breast implants, in particular, those with a textured outer shell".<sup>17</sup> Figure 1. shows an electron microscope scan of such surfacing on an Allergan Biocell textured silicone implant, the same model recalled in 2019 after the FDA linked their surfacing to an especially increased risk of BIA-ALCL.<sup>18</sup> The surfacing technology utilized creates jagged microscopic pockets across the whole of the implant's surface, influencing the growth of fibroblasts onto the capsule, but their efficacy at this is considered "controversial".<sup>19</sup>

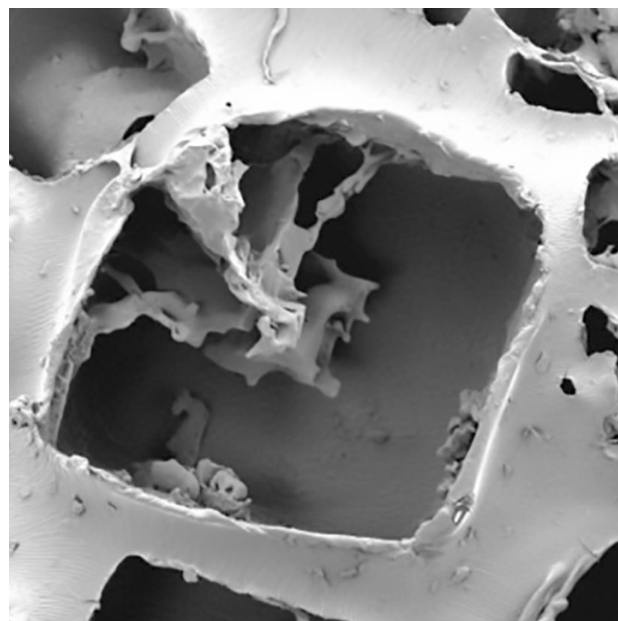


Figure 1. Allergan Biocell (Santa Barbara, Calif) in scanning electron microscopy...  
(Simon Barr, Ernie Hill, Ardeshir Bayat 2009, F. 10)  
CC BY 2.0

<sup>15</sup>David J. Collett, Hinne Rakhorst, Peter Lennox, Mark Magnusson, Rodney Cooter, Anand K. Deva 2019, 31-32.

<sup>16</sup>Collett, Rakhorst, Lennox, Magnusson, Cooter, Deva 2019, 32.

<sup>17</sup>Collett, Rakhorst, Lennox, Magnusson, Cooter, Deva 2019, 30

<sup>18</sup>Center for Devices and Radiological Health. 2024.

<sup>19</sup>Collett, Rakhorst, Lennox, Magnusson, Cooter, Deva 2019, 32

I accessed breast augmentation under the Medicaid-based Oregon Health Plan (OHP) in 2016. Such luck in accessing an expensive surgery under state funding can only be attributed to my chronic precarity and a departure from California to Oregon in 2015: the year I came out, and the year I was also queerbashed and rendered legally disabled. To say that having access to gender affirming care (GAC) saved my life during these years is an understatement. Psychic distress from PTSD following being bashed, the difficult precarity of early-transition, and a body that couldn't change quickly enough from hormones alone all left me desperate for more drastic interventions, for more drastic change. At the advice of my surgeon, I chose "teardrop" Allergan Biocell implants at my pre-op, oblivious to any risk of toxicity or carcinogenicity.

Three years later, in 2019, I received a letter from my surgeon's office notifying me that my specific model of breast implant had been recalled worldwide by Allergan and informing me of the existence of BIA-ALCL. They also let me know that since they won't recommend replacing the implants just because of a recall, under Medicaid I would not have any insurance to cover an exchange for a different model. Essentially, I was too poor to worry about BIA-ALCL; I was told I must wait until I either contract lymphoma or experience a capsular contracture (a break in the flesh capsule surrounding the implants) before the state would fund any operation involving my breast implants. Still now, almost a decade after their installation, they remain in my chest.

Synthetic breasts cause synthetic cancer; synthetic becoming, *becoming-toxic*, affirms my sex. The history of my own transsexual affirmation is toxic. The socialization of transsexual women is achieved through social environments toxic to us, which we are toxic to. The gender affirming "care" we receive is often double bound as a *pharmakon*: a poisonous cure. Poisonous to us, perhaps, but especially poisonous to cisgender society. Transsexuals are often messengers of autonomous, embodied refusal. The precarious among us pursue desperate and sometimes dangerous attempts at sexual sovereignty under a fascist, racist, cissexual hegemony vehemently opposed to such action, regardless of personal risk. Those whose bodies manifest

intersex characteristics, myself included, often have little choice in the matter.

## Theory

A central inspiration for *Pharmakon* is a collection of essays titled *Synthetic Becoming*<sup>20</sup>, most specifically Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward's essay within, titled "Toxic Sexes: Perverting Pollution and Queering Hormone Disruption". *Synthetic Becoming* builds on Celia Roberts' conceptualization of hormones as "messengers of sex",<sup>21</sup> the authors "interrogate signals—chemical and cultural—transmitted and communicated within planetary-wide infrastructures of hormones and hormone-disrupting chemicals".<sup>22</sup> The print version itself is toxic, as editor Lenka Veselá reveals even the heavily processed recycled paper chosen for its pressing was selected because it contained the highest available content of endocrine-disrupting chemicals within plastic fibers interwoven throughout.<sup>23</sup>

Endocrine disruption, an ongoing, inevitable process in the toxic 21st century<sup>24</sup> is central to a figuration of *synthetic becoming*—"the figuration of synthetic becoming emphasizes that we are not only synthetic but also constantly being synthesized".<sup>25</sup> To Ah-King and Hayward, "endocrine disruption is an unavoidable co-presence in the liveliness of organisms",<sup>26</sup> endocrine disruption is so widespread that our presence on this planet necessitates some level of sexual/endocrine disruption taking place in the body of every living being, the only conceivable variable being one's direct proximity to chemical disasters and pollution. One could surmise this to be mediated primarily through environmental racism and the governance of planetary annihilation through the constant pollution of the biosphere by Western militaries, governments and corporations. The contributions that *Synthetic Becoming* make to trans studies are directly confrontational to a "disavowal of the sick"<sup>27</sup> and a "disavowal of the transsexual"<sup>28</sup>, those

<sup>20</sup>ed. Lenka Veselá 2022.

<sup>21</sup>Celia Roberts 2007.

<sup>22</sup>Vesela 2022. 13.

<sup>23</sup>Vesela 2022. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward 2022. 23.

<sup>25</sup>Vesela 2022. 13.

<sup>26</sup>Ah King and Hayward 2022. 29.

<sup>27</sup>Cameron Awkward-Rich 2022. 15.

<sup>28</sup>Andrea Long Chu and Emmet Harsin Drager 2019. 106.

abandonments Cameron Awkward-Rich shows are foundational to trans studies' inception into the academy. He also demonstrates that trans scholars have long strived to disassociate themselves from a conflation between trans and the toxic in a bid for acceptance and authority within academic spheres.<sup>29</sup> My intervention here asserting transsexual toxicity as an inevitable and ongoing process is purposefully contrary to such liberal abandonments of the precarious and marginal, choosing instead to embrace our synthetic toxicity, to uphold the oft-forgotten milieu of maladjusted trans women whose efforts toward continued survival deserve only the highest honor.

## Materiality

Much like *Synthetic Becoming's* toxic binding, *Pharmakon* plays with toxic themes in parallel with toxic materials. Each component of the piece was selected for its toxicity: synthetic fabrics made of micro-fine plastics line the walls, suspended from the ceiling; blood red, tacky spandex lines the floor; an old lead-painted stool is the only provided seating. A flash photography umbrella made of finely textured plastic is draped in reflective plastic projection fabric. The texture of a flash umbrella is unique in that it's designed to spread light most effectively, causing a "soft-box" effect on its outer surface when light is shined through. Not only is this an ideal rear-projection material, but such chemically or mechanically abraded plastic surfaces are also more prone to shedding microplastics than glossy-surfaces.<sup>30</sup> As the umbrella is a stand-in for my breast, the metaphor is made complete.

*Pharmakon* is programmed and projection-mapped entirely within TouchDesigner, a visual node-based programming environment useful for creative multimedia expression, a new-media environment that emphasizes interactivity and real-time. The audio elements beside the recorded narrative are synthesized in real-time within Ableton Live. All visual programming was done by me in TouchDesigner, using electron microscopy scans of breast implants<sup>31</sup> as imagery, modified in use as secondary materials under Creative Commons licensing, culminating in two video feeds to be projected onto the installation. *Figure 2* is a screenshot of my network, demonstrating the modular nature of TouchDesigner programming.

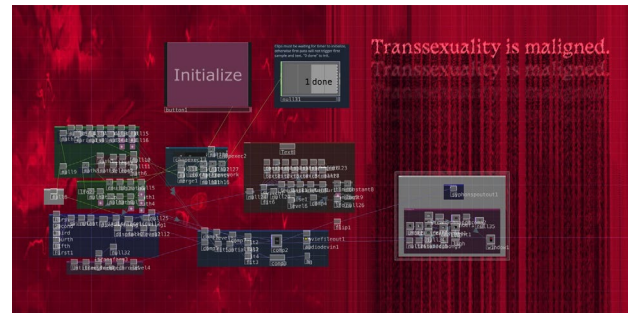


Figure 2. TouchDesigner Network

*Pharmakon's* installation can be seen in *Figures 3 and 4*, and the video feed in *Figure 5*. It features a large, opaque, white, textured flash umbrella suspended in midair with a rear-projection cloth draped from its bottom edge. The projector points onto these surfaces from above and behind, casting onto them a seeping, undulating image of textured breast implant microscopy in the shape of a breast. A semi-transparent displacement layer made from an image of my right nipple is superimposed. The image grows and melts and seems to pulsate endlessly, moving, jiggling, in response to motion. It is blood red in stark monochrome. The umbrella-breast stands alone above a projected rainfall of blood onto the floor, constructed from a TouchDesigner network that mimics the visual effect of pixel sorting. The sound of rainfall being synthesized fills the room alongside an ominous droning bass. Upward motion increases the appearance and sound of rainfall. Downward motion causes it to waver. Words appear and disappear across the surface of the rainfall's fabric as a recording of my voice speaks aloud lines from these stanzas in a seemingly random order:

"Transsexual life is toxic.  
Toxicity is transsexual life.  
Toxicity is maligned.  
Transsexuality is maligned.  
Toxic sex is a *PHARMAKON*.  
A poisonous cure.  
Toxic to a dying empire.

A politician signing our death warrants is logging on to

<sup>29</sup>Awkward-Rich 2022. 27.

<sup>30</sup>Simone Kefer, Oliber Miesbauer, Horst-Christian Langowski 2021

<sup>31</sup>Simon Barr, Ernie Hill, Ardeshir Bayat 2009, F. 10. CC BY 2.0.



TS4rent.com after the legislative session ends.  
 His wife will never know.  
 He fucks these girls in his car on the way home.  
 He sucks their dicks and swallows their estrogenated cum.  
*It's not gay, because they're women.*  
 His son is drinking oat milk and dancing on TikTok like a faggot again...

Endocrine disrupting chemicals are everywhere.  
 In rain this umbrella sheds endocrine disrupting chemicals from its surface to keep me dry.  
 The plastic particles wash into the waterways to turn the frogs gay.  
 We are one in the same, this umbrella and I.  
 When I piss and flush the toilet,  
 I imagine a thousand fish in Lake Ontario becoming beautiful Vyvanse-addicted mermaids.  
 I am become corporeal environmental toxicity, fundamentally foreign from and disastrous to my surroundings; a statement not meant to emasculate the steel foundry a few blocks from my door.

Show me a transsexual woman who hasn't been called toxic to her face,  
 and I will show you a coward.  
 Transsexuals intoxicate everything we touch,  
 like a wicked Midas turning everything to drugs.  
 We represent the many possibilities hiding behind a doorway  
 of absolute refusal that few could ever dare to open.

This umbrella is my tit.  
 My motherly love.  
 My nourishing mother.  
 She is shedding silicone into my lymphatic system from her textured surface. She sheds into me and the waterways and in this way, I am one with the earth through our collective poisonings.  
 My plastic mother is so very deep inside me.  
 My motherly plastics, my toxic becoming, my becoming-toxic,  
 potentially fatal and always deadly.  
 I suckle at her nipple and drink deep."

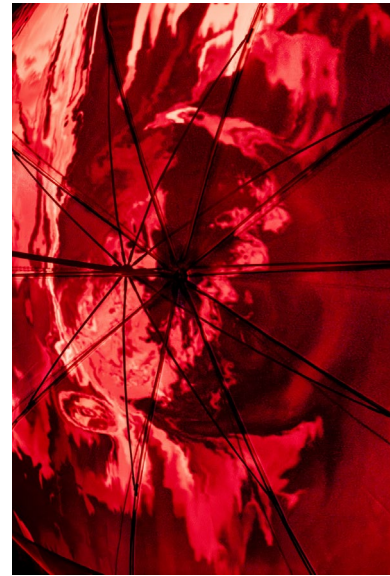


Figure 3. Pharmakon (closeup)



Figure 4. Pharmakon (closeup)



Figure 5. Pharmakon, cropped still from combined feed

The space is dominated by contradictory feelings of vastness and enclosure. The viewer is not necessarily a passive actor in the work. They are invited to sit on a lead-painted black piano bench that disappears into its background. Behind the projection is an OAK-D depth sensing camera attuned to measure human motion directionality on 3 axes. Gesture potentiates movement within the projection, it affects the audio mix, the volume of the spoken word, the volume of the sound of rain, but most importantly has an additive effect on the algorithm determining the stanza of the spoken word track armed for playback. If a viewer moves at the right moment, the piece progresses; if they do not it maintains the current stanza. The viewer can choose to be a passive actor and witness the piece unfold, never knowing their inaction is preventing them from viewing its entirety.

Much like transsexual becoming, inaction is rewarded with incoherence and monotony. Action has a favorable or unfavorable effect to the viewer; it either disrupts their ability to witness the entire piece or enables it but is never transparent about the mechanism of action required to work it with intention. In a sense, this article is a cheat-sheet to my artistic rendition of a double-bind that's intentionally constricting, oppressive and opaque, but offers some ephemeral solution. Jiggling the representative tit is its intended control schema. The user can hold their hand before the piece, and it will seem to move in sync with the gesture. This causes the projection to bounce, the stanza to shift, and the horrors to continue unfolding in an uncertain manner. A pathetic kind of bare life lies within this tit endlessly bleeding out on the floor like Sun Yuan and Peng Yu's *Can't Help Myself*,<sup>32</sup> seeping its bloody carcinogenicity, meaninglessly jiggled only to produce more and more expositions of transsexual despair in a toxic embrace of a depressive experience.

## Conclusion

This work is a confrontational intervention in trans studies and research-creation utilizing an autotheoretical basis, an invitational peek into transsexual queer otherworlding, and an interrogation of the concepts of toxicity, queer gesture, and trans precarity. New media methods involving real-time audio-visual synthesis techniques in TouchDesigner provide an interactive and

This work is a confrontational intervention in trans studies and research-creation utilizing an autotheoretical basis, an invitational peek into transsexual queer otherworlding, and an interrogation of the concepts of toxicity, queer gesture, and trans precarity. New media methods involving real-time audio-visual synthesis techniques in TouchDesigner provide an interactive and gesture-dependent viewer experience meant to invoke sensations of surveillance, contradiction, despair, and enclosure. In place of justifying or explaining the meaning of my work, this article presents its underlying theories, experiences and thought processes. My friend Catherine Swan developed an autotheoretical research practice she calls *Surrealist Fantasies*—methodology as “a path of knowing, not a scientific method.”<sup>33</sup> Katie's work inspires me to never defang my adversarial, anarchic creative expression of lived precarity, to always choose confrontation over capitulation, engaging between the Surreal and material to synthesize acts of creation. With *Pharmakon* I dip my toes into exhibition and publication as an early-career scholar hoping to do those notions justice. I derive my transfeminism from history, my experiences, and surroundings; and take to heart the teachings and example set by my teacher McKenzie Wark, who instructed me in autotheory and authorship at The New School. She often mashes autotheory and autofiction together, as she explains in her 2023 missive on the topic *Critical (Auto) Theory*,

*“I think of autotheory as not too different from autofiction. Both are interested in the perceptual. Autofiction is more interested in the affective dimensions of what's perceived; autotheory more the conceptual. It's more interesting to think of autofiction/autotheory as tactics rather than genres, and as a continuity of tactics.”*<sup>34</sup>

Autotheoretical research-creation in *Pharmakon* is a tactical synthesis between qualitative analysis and memory, and corporeality, as media. The tactics of using memory and corporeality to assert the reliability of one's words feel core to Wark's definition of autotheory as something “interested in the perceptual.” This is precisely

<sup>32</sup>Guggenheim Foundation 2013.

<sup>33</sup>Catherine Swan forthcoming.

<sup>34</sup>McKenzie Wark 2023, emphasis hers.



why I rely on these tactics. For the transsexual labeled insane, doubly abandoned by an academic turn from sickness and transsexuality,<sup>35</sup> autotheory is a lifeline from the margins to scholarship and credibility without sacrificing the toxic qualities that make us who we truly are. To create art that *does theory or produces theory* is confounding, but with success it transforms our oppression-borne hardships to reproducible knowledges as theory in a way that directly challenges suffocating liberal paradigms within queer and trans studies.

I originally created this piece as my final project for a course taught by Christine Quail at McMaster University as part of its graduate program in Gender and Social Justice. Titled "Critical Hope," this course focused on a topic and positioning of queer theory I knew I would struggle with as a transsexual pessimist. Queer theory that celebrates life under racial capitalism pains me. Expressions of queer hope feel alienating to me at times, as divorced as the feeling is from my experience. Gender and sexuality to me are mundane and rudimentary, punishing, not a constant source of intrinsic joy or hope but often the opposite. My transition wasn't freeing; it replaced an insufferable problem with somewhat more sufferable ones. As I lay *Pharmakon* to rest, I will pose one final assertion: Transness alone cannot save us; queer joy does not remove our Damocles' sword of impending legal and carceral enclosure. We need new theories, new positions, new tactics.

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<sup>35</sup>Awkward-Rich 2022. 27.