



UNBECOMING FEMALE BODIES

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Everytime I hear the expression «female body» I behave as if I were a videogame avatar who spots, behind the flickering lights of the festival, the sniper that never misses a shot: I turn around and run. As a critical thinker and a transgender and queer activist I've been trained to recognize the danger of those inoffensive and well intentioned debates surrounding the "feminine body"— its metaphysical weight and its capacity to present itself as a machine of "evidence". Some of these self-evident meanings have already been presumed in the nature of the question asked. Organizing principles and codifica-

tion systems are already at work. Someone assumptions have already being made: the body who speaks is a feminine body and this has been deduced with a certainty that doesn't appear to be problematic or worthy of questioning. This certainty allows you to make a whole combination of inferences that go from the details of my anatomy towards my social status (sexual or professional) and my reproductive condition.

The machine of gender evidence of the "feminine body" is disrupted as soon as I try to narrate my own life. I was born in Francoist Spain where my body was assigned the feminine sex. I was diagnosed with a congenital jaw problem that made me spend the next 18 years of my life under the medical establishment's gaze and regulatory practices. I grew up as the dyke girl at school. I got involved with queer politics in the 90's and I started taking testosterone outside of the medical and legal protocols for gender reassignment a few years ago...Should my body be considered feminine or masculine? O better yet neither of the two? I'm already beginning to make this possible. If I'm quick enough, I tell myself, perhaps I can fool the gender sniper. But I know, following Deleuze and Guattari, that the lines of flight are not open doors but rather conceptual bridges that have to be built. So I decide that looking for an exit in this case is equivalent to offering a short exercise in cognitive emancipation. Abandon the obsolete metaphysical category of "feminine body" to enter into the horizon of the transgender and queer deconstruction.

The theme of this debate can't be addressed without putting in question the forms of enunciation of the biological sciences, but also those of the human sciences, mass media, and the entertainment industries. These discourses persist in reifying the body and reducing it to a given natural material as well as inscribing it as a marker of an indisputable sexual difference. In contrast, a transgender and queer critique implies a radical decentering and unlearning of those forms of scientific and mass media enunciations, a displacement of the grammar that supports terms such as "the body" and "sexual difference".

I'll start with a low blow, with an affirmation, which is disproportionate and provocative. The feminine body as well as the masculine body are political fictions. This is not to say that they don't exist. Of all the political fictions, the body is characterized for its state of being alive. I would therefore modify slightly my first affirmation: the feminine body and the masculine body are living political fictions whose form, entity, use and constituents have never stopped changing historically.

I have elaborated the term "*somathèque*" in French in order to distance myself from the theological and naturalist definitions of the body and focus instead on the production of living political fictions. The notion "*somathèque*" is an attempt to think of the body as a living political archive, the product of a variable equation of techniques of the body, techniques of the government and apparatuses of verification. In critical terms this supposes that the body (feminine or masculine, homosexual, heterosexual, transsexual, normal or pathological, valid or invalid) has no ontological status outside of the political and cultural practices that represent and regulate it. The medical and biological discourses, the juridical and administrative systems, media and economics discourses produce the body they try to represent. For a political genealogy of *somathèques*, the question is no longer "what is the feminine body?" but rather "how are living political fictions constructed?". How are life chances administered and distributed? Why do certain bodies

have access to the techniques of governance and apparatus' of verification while others do not? Why are certain bodies considered as political subjects while others simply are not? How is it possible to intervene in the systems of representations and the discourses that determine and distribute life and death chances?

Here the conceptual distinction between "feminine body" and "becoming a political subject", between the body as an organic material and the body as a political fiction, is not limited to the semantic or nominal question, but rather concerns the structures of subjectification. This distinction could itself disrupt the entire grammar of feminism and the whole political history of the difference of the sexes.

Through a schematic political genealogy of somathèques and three case studies (the feminine necropolitical body, the feminine biopolitical body and the feminine farmacopornographic body) I shall argue for the contingent character of these political fictions and the way in which they remain constitutively open.