



EGO HIPPO

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La question politique est d'abord celle de la capacité des corps quelconques à s'emparer de leur destin.¹

[The political matter is first and foremost any body's ability to take hold of its destiny.]

Once, my partner and I were hilariously simulating a nasty fight while biking through Paris. Each of us would think of something to say, then catch up with the other one and deliver a blow with a malicious smile. Transphobia is such a key element of our humor that it wasn't long before we started calling each other girls and using the other's former female name to refer to him. But little did I know that Raymond would dare to go so far. At one point he looked at me, his cheeks blushing at his own audacity, and said: "I never thought you were a hippopotamus."

I laughed so hard that I almost fell off my bike. This sharp, definitive statement was so unexpected a transgression of an unspoken rule: never mention that I'm not *really* a hippopotamus. At that point, my baby hippopotamus alter-ego had become (much) more than an empowering joke about my chubbiness and childishness. It was, in fact, the main way through which I had learned to deal with what was broadly considered to be my "trans identity," a term that always felt uncomfortable and irrelevant. For a while, if someone was asking me how I "identified," I would joke about being a hippopotamus trapped in a human's body – later, a human trapped in a hippopotamus' body, until my humorous "truth" solidified and I began announcing myself as an old butch hippo dyke trapped in a young human faggy transboy's body (it may sound better in French).

florentin félix morin

EGO HIPPO

the subject as metaphor

Such an "identity" allowed me to (verbally) escape, all at once, several sets of categorization that govern human bodies ("gender," "sexuality,"² age) through the supposedly sarcastic metaphor of transanimality. Now that I'm growing a bit tired of answering any kind of "identity" investigation, I no longer find those detours witty or funny. However, I do strongly love when my friends call me "hippo," refer to my "paws" and pretend that they see no difference between me and one of my stuffed hippopotamuses, except that I'm a little bigger than most of them. In a surprising, sometimes overwhelming way I find comfort in this collectively performed animal identity. Let me put it this

way: something about being a hippo makes me feel cute, confident, sexy, and safe. I discovered that another self was available for me: being a hippo means that I don't have to be a boy or a girl, a child or an adult, normal or strange. It means that my smile becomes a hippo smile, and the way that I carry my body, a hippo walk. It brings me freedom, space, and a thrilling sense of possibility. Where does this transformative power come from? How does a word, how does an image disrupt "reality" to the point that my body's relationship to space is somewhat altered?

Here is a basic assertion that I will complicate later: my hippo ego was first a metaphor. I do not experience it as ontologically given, and I am fully aware that I created it with friends and loved ones. It is "merely" an image, but it is at once my shield, my screen, and my skin. My shield, because it linguistically and materially provides me with a way to evade (trans)gender assumptions and injunctions. My screen, because it is an imaginary surface of projection through which I can (dis)organize myself. And hippo is my skin, because it is a vulnerable and meaningful point of contact between my flesh and the (rest of the) world. Hippopotamus: the very word is powerful music to my ears.³ Hippopotamus is (metaphorically) my gender insofar as I oppose it to "male" or "female," and even more specifically to "transgender." When my becoming transgender had sort of closed something for me in terms of identity/identification, becoming a hippo brought me back to an open field with an open sky. Unlike the somewhat checkered, locked-down, and policed space of transgender, the space of *transpecies* remained open, as it is not *scripted* (yet⁴). What is *transpecies* and how does my becoming a hippopotamus relate to this concept?

Transpecies can be temporarily defined as any literal, figural, metaphorical and/or material migration from a species to another species. *Transpecies* is concrete, and/or imaginary. *Transpecies* emphasizes the fluidity and indeterminacy of the process of becoming. It reveals the contingency and reconfigurability of identification and/or embodiment, as the possible hybridizations between human and

non-human are infinite. It challenges the idea that there is such a thing as a fully, unproblematically human body. It reminds us that the norms associated with the category of human have precluded numerous potentialities in terms of embodiment and imaginaries, prohibiting bodies, closing worlds. "Transgender," however, has become territorialized, to use the Deleuzian lexicon; or more precisely it has been an important category in the process that territorialized gender deviance, a process critically and meticulously documented by David Valentine. Because I naturally love bodies of water, I will use a water-based comparison: if "transpecies" is a large lake, wild, spectacular, inhabited, possibly dangerous, mysteriously opaque, and painfully beautiful because it is unfathomable, "transgender" would be a swimming pool structured by defined lanes, organized around and by a purpose, empty of magic, busy but lifeless, functional, but not accessible. Discussing how trans bodies are like bodies of water, Woelfle-Erskine and Cole write:

Bodies of water are not really containable, and defining the boundary is always a matter of contingency and choice. A river or lake is not contained by its shoreline but seeps underground, hidden or revealed through relations to other entities. The engineering view considers a river as water that is somehow in a "channel," separate from the groundwater, and as a lifeless, disembodied fluid that is separate from the life forms it contains and nurtures. (304)

It seems that "transgender" as a category is to gender deviance what the engineering view described above is to the depths of a river. In other words, "transgender" is operating as a normative device, leaving a burning need for creative diversions of hegemonic gender norms that would not be swallowed and recreated by the matrix of gender itself – one of the multifaceted, insidious, truly sly apparatuses of power that the human species is responsible for. Thus, "by seeing beavers as reaching across streams to divert water down multiple paths, [Woelfle-Erskine and Cole] see a way for

humans to be trans in a new way” (308). I suggest that my hippo-self is my chosen way to be trans instead of being transgender. But is it too simplistic – maybe too optimistic – to oppose the category of transgender as institutionalized, norm-producing, territorialized on the one hand, and on the other the norm-free, uncharted, and possibility-producing space of transpecies? How does my becoming-hippo relate to transgender, and how does it relate to transpecies? What can it tell us about the relationship between transgender and transpecies, and about the subject’s agency in the constitution of its identity/reality?

In this article I start by enthusiastically presenting my “hippo-self” as a mode of subjective and intersubjective identification, drawing on Jacob Hale’s theorization of SM as gender technology. Then I infuse some skepticism into the mix by investigating the social politics of claiming a hippo identity. And last, I return to the magical power of metaphors, and I explore how my hippo-metaphor materializes, analogizing it to a “cut” and to the work of fiction as theorized by Jacques Rancière.

expecto patronum

One of the most beautiful images that carried me through adolescence is the one of a patronus. A patronus is an animal-shaped magical glittery shield that comes out of your wand when, facing a dementor, you scream “Expecto Patronum!”⁵ It protects you from the soul-eating power of the dementor, who will kill you by sucking every joy out of you if you don’t produce a patronus before it “kisses” you to death. Each person’s patronus is usually an animal with which they have an affinity – nevertheless, there can and will be surprises.

Can an “identity” accomplish the same kind of protection? What is “to identify,” what am I projecting, what am I expressing when I say that I am a hippopotamus? What does language do? Let us start with a relatively simple example. When someone who knows about my being trans calls me a “goofy guy” (with the best intentions) and I correct them by saying “you mean a goofy hippopotamus,”

I am attempting to intervene in their representations of myself and of what they imagine to be my “gender.” To what extent can such an intervention hope to be successful? In response to “transgender” having become a regime of truth in the Foucauldian sense, I wish to introduce an element of play, of plasticity by producing, and occupying, a blind spot within it. Foucault writes: “Subjectivity is conceived as that which is constituted and transformed in the relationship that it has to its own truth [...] Truth is mainly conceived as a system of obligations” (15).

In that sense, if “transgender” is, to many of us, more of a “system of obligations” than it is an emancipatory term, can its grip be loosened by the producing of other, maybe less realistic truths? A first view on my animal alter ego would be that it is an attempt to do so: an act of language, a verbal construction that I articulate in protest of a definition of myself as fully contained and explained by the framework of “transgender.” Now, what exactly is the difference between “representation” and “identity”? As a “representation” that I try to share with others, does my becoming a hippopotamus belong to the imaginary? It seems as if it does, but the dichotomy between what is imaginary and what is real needs to be complicated: did my becoming trans, my becoming a boy not start with a “phantasmatic effort of alignment” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 105)? Who gets to decide which “identities” or which “identifications” can enter the realm of the “real,” and which are confined to the realm of the imaginary? Mainstream transgender discourses and politics frame transness as a matter of “gender identity,” insisting that those identities are “real.” Can the bringing together of a male identity and a hippo identity, of transgender and transspecies, tell us something about the distinction between what is real and what is imaginary? Isn’t “identity” always constituted within representation?⁶ Isn’t “identification” precarious, unstable, appearing and disappearing?⁷ Investigating the passage from a strictly subjective self-identification to an intersubjectively enacted identification, Jacob C. Hale writes:

SM as gender technology allowed me to experiment with masculinities as part of a process of self-construction in which I became more masculine, in embodiment, in self-presentation, and in identification [...] I needed to know that my gender identification could be enacted legibly to at least one other person for it to be convincing enough to me that it could transform from a self-identification fully contained within my fantasy structure to a self-identification with a broader social sphere of enactment. Daddy, of course, could not have read my gender performativity as a boy's gender performativity if there had not been culturally available constructs of boy into which she could fit it. (229)

In this understanding, gender is a *relational* concept, and the mediation of the "other person" is what allows Hale's self-identification to move from the containment of the "fantasy" sphere to the sphere of the social. *Legibility* is the key from one sphere to another: the new gender codes that Hale experiments with have to be legible (by Daddy), therefore cited from a set of codes that do exist prior to his enactment of them. It seems as if the distinction between subjective and intersubjective might operate more interestingly than the one between imaginary and real – after all, everything that's real is also imaginary. Is the intersubjective a middle ground between the subjective and the social?

My hippo ego was, in fact, given to me by a friend. As we were laughing on the carpet of their room, holding our stomachs and rolling back and forth, this friend saw me as a hippo. It quickly became my nickname, my name, the meaning that somehow helped to reconcile my body with the streets of Paris. Today, in some of my most precious relationships, I exist as a hippopotamus. I *was identified* as a hippo before I identified as one: this underlines the intersubjective, if not social, component of my hippo identification. Social and real, however, are not synonymous. What did this self-identification, what did this image change for me? Hale writes:

For some ftms who used to be leatherdykes, our abilities to rechart our bodies – I would

even say to change our embodiments without changing our bodies, that is, to change the personal and social meanings of our sexualized bodies – began in the queer resignifying practices available to us in leatherdyke cultures. (230)

I was already familiar with the remapping and reconfiguring of the body and its meaning(s), with what Hale, using a Deleuzian framework, calls "deterritorialization and reterritorialization" (ibid.), through the trans cultures in which I participated. Those cultures, in a sense, facilitated my becoming-hippo: my trans-species identification developed from the "resignifying practices" that I had cultivated as a transgender subject. Thus, my becoming-hippo comes from transgender in two ways: it is a rebellion against "transgender" as a normative account of gender non-conformity, but it has also been enabled by "transgender" as a paradigm or a toolbox for recharting the body and its meaning. And, although the scale is probably much smaller, I would suggest that the group of friends that calls me a hippo can be analogized to Hale's leatherdyke culture, insofar as the performativity of my naming myself a hippo is *collectively produced*. But the analogy can only go so far: there are no socially legible codes through which I could enact a hippo identity. My becoming a hippo is as real as a metaphor can be real: it is an image that I hold in my mind and project onto the boundary between myself and the (sometimes inhospitable) world I inhabit. It is my patronus.

*nobody passes*⁸ as a hippopotamus

Should a metaphor be taken seriously? Let us go back to the question of the social legibility of my hippopotamus identity. Although men and women, girls and boys do not exist outside of human bodies, hippopotamuses do: this is perhaps the main difference between (trans)gender and (trans)species in terms of what can be socially enacted and what cannot. To spell it out even more clearly, I don't socially exist as a hippopotamus because a hippopotamus is something other than a human, and however I

“identify,” my body is unproblematically read and treated as a human body. However, evaluations of transness that are based on the degree of achievable “passing” have been shown to be unsatisfying.⁹ Even when a perfect passing is theoretically achievable, as it is sometimes the case with transgender identifications, passing is not considered by most trans discourses and politics to be a valid criterion with which to determine the “seriousness” of transness. The fact that I do not socially “pass” as a hippopotamus is therefore not the reason why transpecies identification is different from transgender identification – when I started writing this article, I did not pass as a boy either. In fact, the keystone concept for most mainstream trans politics is the concept of self-determination, which has impacted the relationship between transgender and transpecies in an interesting way. Here, I wish to introduce the concept of “xenogender,” which has been recently (c.2014) forged by the very loquacious “non-binary” online community. It is defined as:

a nonbinary gender identity that cannot be contained by human understandings of gender; more concerned with crafting other methods of gender categorization and hierarchy such as those relating to animals, plants, or other creatures/things.¹⁰

The issue of the “inclusion” of xenogenders within trans politics and support networks is a burning issue in the “global” (i.e., predominantly North American) online trans community, as well as in a few places of the physical world, including France. Here, the terms of this conversation are the following: a massive group of Tumblr users, mostly young people (or should I say entities) who are mainly “active” online, expresses anger to an already very much divided, politically active trans (de)community mainly composed of older (than twenty-five) activists whose politics are focused on ending state and state-sanctioned violence toward trans people. The former are frustrated not to “feel included” in the latter’s discourses. It is hard to know what this inclusion would translate into in terms of

actual political agenda. Dialogue seems impossible: it has certainly been unsuccessful so far. From this biased account, I want to make three points.

Firstly, there is an indisputably creative dimension at work in the making of xenogenders. Could it be that those planets and constellations are, as Hale suggested should be done, using the “soft, permeable edges [of the multiple, overlapping boundaries of gender categories] as sites for creative production of new, more just genderqueer discursive locations and structures” (Hale 235)? Could it be that the framework of transgender has accidentally, but perhaps productively, enabled other kinds of becomings to be thought, claimed, lived? Secondly, as much as I love to psychically explore the cosmos and think of myself as a baby hippopotamus, I share the concern that those multiplying, non-material identities are actually damaging (trans)feminist politics by displaying a new essentialism and positing analogies that do not make any sense from a materialist perspective – one is not oppressed as a werewolf as one is oppressed as a trans person: to claim otherwise is, as expected, infuriating for many of us. Thirdly, were the conditions of dialogue not so complicated, this conflict could be an opportunity to bridge trans(feminist) political activism with a full recognition of the power of dreams, images and affects. As it is already the case in some theorizations and praxis of feminist self-defense, a more creative investment of the psychic sphere seems to be needed in order to counter the totalizing and paralyzing power of victimization. For instance, Harlan Weaver’s “understanding of many trans* experiences as being moved by feelings – hope, sadness, discomfort, happiness, desire – more than conscious decision” (349) may open a fruitful conversation on the constant interaction between the psychic, the affective and the social. When we resolutely step away from essentialist frameworks, there is no reason why we couldn’t combine a materialist analysis of social relations with a commitment to take full advantage of our limitless ability to create mental images – images that can help us survive. Online, where bodies are infinitely

malleable because they are absent, one can find mind-blowing, innovating ways to become a hippopotamus or a dragon (Cardenas, Head, Margolis, et al.), but what is not politically useful is the conflation of those explorations and socially enacted, sometimes life-endangering gender transitions. Not because the latter is more legitimate, more reasonable or less absurd than the former; only because in the present time, transgender and transpecies phenomena do not benefit from the same historical possibilities. Indeed, there is no discursively constructed “human-to-hippopotamus” subject position into which I could insert myself. In metaphorically becoming a hippopotamus, I am not socially un-becoming human. If anything, I could be becoming *more human*, not because of any action that I take but because the political context is shifting in the way that Susan Stryker notes:

[...] increasingly, some transgender subjects who previously might have been marked for death now find themselves hailed as legally recognized, protected, depathologized, rights-bearing minority subjects [...] The criterion for this bifurcation of the population along the border of life and death is race. (“Biopolitics” 40)

It is through whiteness that some transgender bodies (such as mine) are becoming (more) human, for transgender as it has been institutionalized can be defined as a discourse that humanizes (white) gender deviants by normalizing (white) gender deviance. Claiming a hippo identity surely does not undo the working of transgender on a societal level. This recognition has to be the premise of any exploration of transpecies identifications. Between the overestimation of my agency in the construction of a hippo-self and the underestimation of the (magical) power of this hippo-self, is there an understanding of this phenomenon that does justice to what transpecies identification can achieve without romanticizing its achievements in a de-politicizing way?

imagining the flesh

Moving away from a strict analogy between transgender and transpecies, can we still

recognize that there is a subversive potential to transpecies identifications and performances? Is it possible that this subversive potential has more to do with gender than it has to do with species? Or that it only has to do with species (and the category of the human) insofar as it has to do with gender? Nicole Seymour offers that “animal drag [...] questions the naturalness of what we might call the *species* role system, which is organized around the supposedly opposing poles of humanity and animality” (262), bringing our attention to “not just the resemblance, but the interrelationship between species performance and gender/sexuality performance” (ibid.). In other words, species performance and gender performance are not distinct or discrete: performing gender is always performing humanness. Therefore, one might say that transgender practices challenge the very notion of “the human,” and reciprocally that transpecies identifications and becomings challenge gender itself. The notion of the “human body” as one, whole, natural, pure(ly human), structured, functional, and contained is that through which our flesh materializes. If “to be forcibly ungendered or to become transgendered renders one’s humanness precarious” (Stryker and Currah 189), it is because undoing gender is undoing the very process of materialization of our flesh as a “human body.” To what extent, then, can we argue that there is some kind of materiality to my hippo-self?

When I say that my identification as a hippopotamus does accomplish *something*, I mean that it does “change my embodiment without changing my body” (Hale 230). It might very well call into question the naturalness of the “human body” without making me more of a hippopotamus: indeed, it may only relate to species inasmuch as it relates to (trans)gender, but it does relate to species in saying something about how inhospitable the (always gendered) category of the human can be, not in affecting hippopotamuses as a species. In that sense, my hippo-self is truly an image by which “actual” hippopotamuses are unconcerned. I could as well be a dinosaur or an elf, and still it would qualify as a transpecies form of metaphorical

becoming. Animal figures are admittedly produced by human subjectivities and the connection and bond I experience with “actual” hippopotamuses will forever remain unreciprocated. “Hippopotamus,” to me, is a metaphor, but I want to suggest that there is, perhaps, some kind of materiality to this hippo-metaphor, not in the sense that I materially become a hippopotamus but in the sense that my flesh perhaps does not remain unchanged by this metaphor. If, through my self-image as a hippopotamus, I walk more freely, more casually, how can my transpecies identification be considered to be fully non-material, or non-somatic? If my becoming a hippopotamus does impact my flesh, it is perhaps because “through metaphor and metonym flesh and signifier are joined”: this is what Eva Hayward calls “trans species somaticity” (“More Lessons” 84). In “More Lessons from a Starfish,” Hayward suggests that transsexual transformation can be reconceptualized as a re-generation of bodily boundaries: “The cut is possibility” (72). The cut does not subtract, it is the condition of a new growth. This new growth is as psychic as it is physical; change is achieved through transformations such as a cut and/or a metaphor. Can my hippo-metaphor be analogized to the cut that removed my breasts from my body? Both those things have considerably impacted the way I stand, sit, walk, run, jump, sneeze, yawn, etc. *The cut is possibility*: can the cut be metaphorical?

Let us return to magic. In Philip Pullman’s trilogy *His Dark Materials* (2007), Lyra and Will are teenagers who come from two different worlds, in a universe where there is a virtually infinite number of parallel worlds. Passages, gateways can be opened (and closed) between one world and another with the “subtle knife” that cuts through the *fabric* of the world. What I find particularly moving is that in Lyra’s world, humans do not have a single body: each human has two bodies. How does that work? One of these bodies is called a “daemon”: it has an animal shape, but it is human. The other body is human-shaped. They both have a different name and their common human consciousness, located inside and between those two

bodies, takes the form of a dialogue. So when Lyra and her daemon Pantalaimon discuss their shared feelings and actions, they can communicate through language *or* through their shared thoughts. As Lyra is still a child, Pantalaimon can transform into any animal form; however, when she grows up, he will take on a definitive form.¹¹ In Will’s world, however, just like in ours, humans do not have daemons. So what happens when someone who comes from Will’s world enters Lyra’s? Their daemon *materializes*. This is how Will’s father describes the phenomenon of meeting his daemon:

The way back to my own world was barred forever. But there were other doorways into other worlds, and a little searching found the way into this. So here I came. And I discovered a marvel as soon as I did, for worlds differ greatly, and in this world I saw my daemon for the first time [...] People here cannot conceive of worlds where daemons are a silent voice in the mind and no more. Can you imagine my astonishment, in turn, at learning that part of my own nature was female, and bird-formed, and beautiful? (Pullman 453–54)

This phenomenon is explained as the becoming visible, the becoming material of a part of the person’s soul that was previously immaterial and invisible. *His Dark Materials* connects the plurality of worlds to the plurality, animality and changeability of bodies, and it also outlines an aesthetics of porosity: the different worlds communicate through doors, windows, openings that result from the *cut* of the subtle knife – *the cut is possibility*. Bodies are plural because worlds are plural, and vice versa. In *His Dark Materials*, bodies are collectivities that transform when they enter another world, which suggests that *changing the body is generating another world*. Porosity, the idea that bodies are open, permeable, is indeed at the heart of some queer theorizations of embodiment (Hayward, “Transxenoestrogenesis”). How can this help us understand my being a hippo? Jacques Rancière writes:

Fiction is not the creation of an imaginary world that would be opposed to the real

world. It is the work that operates dissensus, that changes the modes of visible presentation and the forms of enunciation [...] This work changes the coordinates of the representable; it changes our perception of tangible events, our way of relating them to subjects, the way that our world is populated by events and figures. (72)

In *His Dark Materials*, the *cut* of the subtle knife performs, on a very concrete level, the exact operation that Rancière defines as the work of fiction – and, of course, the book itself is a “subtle knife” since reading is a way of expanding the limits of our world, of accessing other worlds. It is important to note that for Rancière the work of fiction is that through which reality itself is constituted as such:

There is no reality in itself, but configurations of what is given as our reality, as the object of our perceptions, our thoughts and interventions. Reality is always the result of a fiction, of a construction of space where the visible, the speakable and the doable are knotting together. It is the dominant fiction, the consensual fiction, that denies its fictionality by pretending to be reality itself and by tracing a simple border line between the realm of the real and the realm of representations and appearances, opinions and utopias. The artistic fiction and the political action dig reality, they fracture it and multiply it on a polemic mode. The work of the politics that invents new subjects and introduces new objects and a new perception of the common data is also a fictional work. That is why the relationship between art and politics is not a passage from fiction to reality but a relationship between two ways of producing fictions. (Ibid.)

My becoming a hippopotamus is a metaphor that (subjectively and intersubjectively) changes the coordinates of what is perceptible or thinkable. It allows me to experience another self, which equates to experiencing another world or “reality.” *Cutting* through the dominant fiction of the gendered human body, it generates a powerful artistic/political image that helps to deal with society’s denial

of gender’s fictionality. My being neither a boy nor a girl but rather a hippopotamus is neither a fully performative act of self-constitution nor a socially insignificant, negligible attempt to claim abjection, but a fictional, therefore political, form of resistance to the (trans)gender policing of my body. It is an embodied metaphor, a patronus, a daemon, a childish dream, and the most precious gift that was ever given.



disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

notes

- 1 Rancière 88.
- 2 Following David Valentine’s insight, I chose to use quotation marks to refer to “gender” and “sexuality,” in order to underline their cultural constructedness, and to simultaneously challenge their supposed separatedness. See Valentine.
- 3 “Gender is a percussive symphony of automatisms, reverberating through the space of our bodies before there is an awareness of awareness itself. Who can say why I heard its music the way I did?,” writes Susan Stryker in *Dungeon Intimacies* 42.
- 4 It is, however, increasingly becoming scrutinized, as shown by the recent, tentative and pretty risible construction of the “Species Identity Disorder.” See Gerbasi et al. 197–222; see also Probyn-Rapsey 294–301.
- 5 Or so it does in the fictional world depicted in the Harry Potter series, by J.K. Rowling.
- 6 “[...] we should think [...] of identity as a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation,” writes Stuart Hall in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* 222.
- 7 “Identifications are never fully and finally made, they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested

and, on occasion, compelled to give way” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 105).

8 I allude here to the following book: Mattilda, aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore, *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*.

9 For an analysis of “trans” that challenges the idea that passing is the goal, the direction of transitioning, see *ibid.* n. 13.

10 Source: <<http://nonbinary.org/wiki/Xenogender>>.

11 The norms about when to talk to or interact with another person’s daemon are very complex. For instance, when two people are arguing, their human bodies will speak while their daemons may physically fight with each other. It is extremely taboo to touch another person’s daemon. Most people’s daemon is female if the human body is male and male if the human body is female. A daemon can’t go far from their human body without inflicting a horrible, excruciating pain to both bodies.

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