

THE NEW MILLENNIUM: EMPOWERMENT OF PLURAL BODIES

By the late 20th century, the synergies of America's Marvel/DC and Japanese comics with TV and cinema flood the market with products for specific target audiences that lead to an increase in the number of fans of manga heroines and superwomen, only superficially modifying the models.

At the turn of the millennium, the graphic novel format spreads massively and the growth of independent publishers produces a new generation of women authors that is consolidated in experimentation and everyday stories involving the body by 2009: a variety of shades outlines a concert of voices that is growing daily in diversity.

Bodies occupied by classical roles question themselves, seeking their own contradictions and taking the floor. New technologies and social media facilitate new feminine expression and are replacing physical originals with new documents that will become unique digital originals or NFTs.

WOMEN AUTHORS

La dona de Vitruvi [The Vitruvian Woman] focuses the voice of the hidden part of humanity in the history of art and at the same time also visualises the lived, maculated, surviving, resilient body... in order to position it as an empowered centre above the devastating stereotypes of the female image. The various forms of beauty are accepted conventions; it is necessary to free them from canons and make them fluid.

Raquel's bodies full of fruit and strength clearly express the contradictions revolving around feminine fragility, revealing the recovery of self-esteem and empowerment as a goal in the search for visibility and self-management. Inner rage makes strong smiles in *Lola Vendetta*.

From self-criticism to shattering stereotypes about internal conditioning factors that gender has been inoculating for centuries, Raquel's bodies reveal the smile as a tool for liberation and power, and self-criticism as the first handicap to overcome. Her bodies enter into a dialogue with those of Núria Pompeia, following in her wake of critical self-affirmation through humour.

Santolaya's plant work is often based on notebooks and travel diaries and carried out in the most immediate approach to natural reality. She works on the organic hybridisation of the female body with warm, sanguine sienna earth, and the arboreal extensions that allow the woman to point to the sky, like intuitive antennae for survival. She is committed to strengthening the biological link with nature by empowering the organic world of emotions and the wild, poetic feminine.

Olga premieres conscious expression and points to the birth of new voices as a turning point in the

change of discourse, denouncing the otherness to which stereotypes have subjected us. New subjectivities overthrow old canons and call for space.

Lola Lorente connects with the graphic, conceptual influence of women pioneers, both in her surrealist touch and in her deformations of the female figure, in its 'disproportions' and the imaginary of 'retro' aesthetics in alternative inner worlds. Their bodies speak of transgressive, bloody gender images. We find them outstripping stereotypes in her blog.

Ana Penyas' bodies are rounded or pointed according to the interests of the voice that speaks. Salvaged grandmothers speak to us of life under invisibility, of defeated or disabling repression. In some bodies they are abductors of joy, still and forever captive, while revealing others relieved and liberated, enjoying the delights of an adapting and living body. She presents the body as a friend accompanying us until the end... She speaks to us about self-love... love for one's body as a vital companion.

IN CONCLUSION

A subjectivity that aims to be diverse emanates from the corporeality of women: the expropriated body, the giant body, the cyborg body, the spied body, the invisible body, the fruit body, the tree body, the wounded body, the lesbian body, the wrinkled body, the lived body, the defector body, the segregated body, the corpse body, the hybrid body, the monstrous body... Bodies that speak of silences, desires and action, limits and transgressions.

From timid republican presence to the silence imposed by the stereotype of the dictatorship, from the transgressions of the avant-garde in the late 20th century to the establishment of anti-models of the new millennium...

The ensemble of voices leads us to discover a new panoramic discourse created by women when they cease to be *patriarchal objects* in order to construct themselves as *free subjects*. These women define themselves in the plurality of a contemporary gaze that coexists with a bodily singularity forever under construction. They are voices that end the discourse in the form of 'To be continued.'

BODIES THAT SPEAK. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BODY IN COMICS BY WOMEN AUTHORS. 1910-2022

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The exhibition *Bodies that Speak. Representations of the Body in Comics by Women Authors. 1910-2022* explores how women's bodies have been represented in comics through illustrations by women authors as part of a chronological journey that starts in the early 20th century and ends in the present day. A journey that demonstrates how patriarchal stereotypes have subjected women to gender roles and abused the female body as a commercial gimmick, and how liberation and empowerment came about when women authors were able to express themselves freely.

From timid republican presence to the silence imposed by the stereotype of the dictatorship, from the transgressions of the avant-garde in the late 20th century to the establishment of anti-models of the new millennium and new fluid, multiple and diverse subjectivities. The expropriated body, the giant body, the cyborg body, the spied body, the invisible body, the fruit body, the tree body, the wounded body, the lesbian body, the wrinkled body, the lived body, the defector body, the segregated body, the corpse body, the hybrid body, the monstrous body... Bodies that speak of silences, desires and action, limits and transgressions.

We will hear the voice of women shattering the silence to which they have been subjected in comics as a part of a discourse that has abused the female body as a commercial gimmick, but also as a place of transgression, while at the same time addressing them merely to train them in gender roles and submission.

The exhibition observes female body forms as represented by the patriarchal voice in contrast to empowered bodies that reject canonical discourse when the free expression of each woman author appears. The exchange between the discourses of new female authors and the avant-garde of the transition, which shattered stereotypes and reencountered silenced voices at the source, reveals that the emergence of a new plural subject of the feminine is not a recent phenomenon.

This body-to-body journey through our comics reveals the discourse of women when they recover their own voice: from a patriarchal stereotype object to the liberation of new fluid, multiple and diverse subjectivities.

FROM THE WOMEN OF THE ¡CU-CUT! GROUP TO THE WOMEN CARICATURISTS OF NOUCENTISME

Comics grow alongside periodicals to reflect the social revolutions of the 20th century, although they are geared towards a male audience. They ignore women's rights and normalise as universal the silence that sustains the masculine. Women authors are hidden in the overwhelming volume of dominant masculinity, despite appearing in the work of the '¡Cu-Cut! Group' and other publications.

Despite not having access to professional communication training from which changes emanate, the caricaturists, or *ninotaires*, Anglada and Tanganelli are at the forefront of the ironic auteur strokes that can be found in satirical magazines in the 1920s, wielding the same strength of strokes or scripts as men. But they are unfortunately excluded from adult dialogue and relegated to the world of children established for them.

Women have left traces in the shadows of a voice with the will to be, beyond seduction, instilling autonomy into bodies that speak of action and movement in the public artistic presence of the feminine.

WOMEN AUTHORS

Influenced by suffragette movements, Lola Anglada's dynamic, self-referential bodies resist the mass enforcement of dominant masculinities with agile humour and irony. Lola Anglada's legacy was an expressionist blend of humour and strong, settled bodies for solid working class women wanting to be free.

In the drawing *Entre artistes* [Between Artists], Maria Riera's gaze brings to life a body that challenges readers to demand a dialogue among equals. Active bodies with a woman's voice appear on the stage.

Laura Albéniz reflects the presence of modern women in the world of dandyism and the *Belle Époque*. The direct stare at the spectator announces a new emerging personality. The influence of flappers and *garçonnes* is changing models.

Ivonne Navarro produced a series of six illustrations in 2019 that drew on Foyer magazine. Using the magazine's covers, Ana Maria Smith's drawings and information about her life, she created 'false covers' full of criticism, irony and even black comedy. These works, which create a dialogue with Ana Maria as an erased woman artist, go beyond Smith to address the situation of women artists in the 20th century.

DICTATORSHIP: FROM SUBMISSION TO PSEUDO MONITORED FREEDOM

While the space of imagination extends the male body into the disorder of play and adventure, the female body is tamed into order and control. Fairy tales create labels of good and evil attached to the clothes of fairies or witches, beautiful princesses or old women beggars... The pink space demands obedient bodies.

Underage status marks the silence that represents women in outlining absent bodies. They are the voiceless creators we are rescuing from a space devalued for being feminine.

Pseudo prominence appears in the 1960s associated with music, luxury and consumption, banal traits that hold modern bodies captive within the same patriarchal order. Women gain a subordinate public space until they are married.

Despite illustrating patriarchal discourse, the *ninotaires* make fashion the tool of change: from static adornment to simplicity that facilitates movement. The dynamism that will fill the streets and professions with new feminine vitality flows within their strokes.

WOMEN AUTHORS

Maria Claret followed canonical norms to create the ideal model for the Franco regime in the form of the Mari-Pepa doll. Dressed in blue, the doll is a puppet in the hands of Mari-Pepa, reiterating the manipulation she herself receives through gender pedagogy. Women are obliged to repeat and spread the stereotype.

The script of *Mary Noticias* [Mary News] followed gender patterns by keeping the female stereotype captive, hidden beneath banal changes that had the appearance of liberation. Despite this small margin, the unmistakable style of Carme Barbarà shatters the conservative aesthetics of the day to reflect a dynamic, casual look in the agile, active bodies of young women who were already filling the workforce.

The solid structure of Rosa Galcerán's drawings instil movement to vanished bodies under the guise of good and evil, triggering their expressions and leaving a *Noucentista* imprint in the depths of the background landscape.

The icons of female submission can be found in the brands that label clothes and attitudes on the female bodies of stories. Powerful women who are survivors have the bad label of ugliness and perversity, while the good label indicates captive, obedient women.

In spite of conventions and within the narrow patriarchal margin of action, Pili Blasco in *Aventuras de Lalita* [Adventures of Lalita] chooses resourceful mischief and rebellion towards the correctness that imprisoned girls in order and submission.

By maintaining the forced incarceration of the body under fashion, make-up and accessories, Maria Pascual brought variety and spectacularity to the feminine look, empowering it with simple ideas to

create a suitable wardrobe for entering the job world, the requisite image of which was created by thriftiness, at a time when *prêt-à-porter* had not yet arrived.

Luisa is one of Barbarà's first characters as a complete author, created when she was a teenager for the magazine *Mis Chicas* [My Girls]. The script responds to normalised naivety in obedience, evolving towards a more dynamic change in her long career in romantic comics, culminating in *Mary Noticias* when she achieves the image of young Nouvelle Vague women. She follows the informal, tousled model dictated by Brigitte Bardot in the 1960s to capture the visual impact of the street, although the pattern is still that of the patriarchal model.

Campos followed the guidelines of Pascual and Barbarà by using English strokes, fashion and landscapes to modernise the iconic look, but patriarchal discourse continued to hold captive bodies in accepted gender positions during each historical moment.

Pardell was a pioneer as the creator of the short film *La doncella guerrera* [The Warrior Maiden] (Juli Taltavull, 1975), which was restored by the Filmoteca de Catalunya in 2015 and screened at the CCCB as part of the show *From Doodles to Pixels: Over One Hundred Years of Spanish Animation*.

THE BODY IN CONFLICT: FEMINIST TRANSGRESSION...

In 1967, Núria Pompeia places the body at the heart of the conflict. Feminisms use humour and pedagogy as new women pioneers demand space through transgressive action in the so-called comic boom of the late 20th century.

Marika, Isa Feu, Montse Clavé or Mariel appear in this new avant-garde, breaking their glass ceilings to re-establish their own voices in transforming discourse. Gender and body are the target of the action with which the feminist voice creates the first cracks in the discourse of adult comics.

The female body is expropriated and shaped as a space of exchange for publishers, authors and readers. Women authors discover that their bodies are read from the patriarchal gaze and demand the transgression of a model loaded with symbolic textuality. Stereotypes need to be deconstructed and experimentation is the tool that women pioneers use to play with forms and revitalise them.

WOMEN AUTHORS

A pioneer in humour, Núria Pompeia focused on the conflict that imprisoned women by placing the body at the heart of the inscriptions of patriarchal symbolism in order to trigger self-awareness of gender asymmetries. Already in *Maternasis* (Kairós, 1967), minimalism empowers the body and strips female reality of its silence. From the condition of reproductive vessel

to the false prize of being an object to be valued/ consumed, the body of unfinished lines challenges us without forgetting the class differences among oppressions.

The bodies drawn by Clavé in her transgressive period speak to us of inner discovery and deepen our knowledge of the body. Intense, graphic scratching demonstrates the need to give depth to her message. Appropriating and controlling the orgasm during masturbation is the great discovery, but it remains at the door to intimacy. At the height of destape [relaxation of sexual censorship after Franco's death], the woman, her back to the audience, refusing to show, turns (offers herself) to the sea...

The subtle irony of Elsa Plaza's pen leads us to a satirical surrealism that dismantles the normality of stereotypes.

Under the pseudonym Isa Feu, Maria Lluïsa Barraquer drew the series *Corazón loco* [Crazy Heart], written by Tornassol, in a groundbreaking, alternative style, in which sex played a prominent role. Feu was the first woman to publish in the magazine *El Víbora* [The Viper], but she soon left the world of comics to devote herself to photography, painting and illustration.

Breaking with the dominant discourse explodes in the use of a variety of styles in Marika's experimental comics, whose combination of graphic languages challenges us to create anti-models. Round shapes are broken in the angles sought by expressionism in the body and line that hardens the impact to deconstruct stereotypes. Marika is the curator of this exhibition, in which she rescues the line of continuity in women authors and amends the historical discourse of comics about the female body according to her doctoral thesis: *El cos okupat. Iconografies del cos femení com a espai de la transgressió masculina en el còmic* [The Occupied Body: Iconographies of the Female Body as a Space of Male Transgression in Comics] (UB, 2017).

...OR A SHIFT IN THE EROTIC GAZE

Giving voice to female bodies provides a plural vision of eroticism, turning normative discourse on its head. Breaking the silence leads to the appearance of the need to question male transgression as well as the dictated ways of looking and creating language.

Women have had to confront a symbolic territory in which their body was the battlefield or erotic object, never the subject. Rethinking language, as much as the body per se, has been vital to discover other versions of Eros.

Self-representation has occupied iconic space, voice and agency, but it has been a minority event despite changing the gaze, opening cracks in the main discourse and sustaining a resilient space.

A shifting gaze on Eros and the body resists in a minority of subjectivities contained in the discourse of comics until the first decade of the new millennium,

when the fruits of transgression begin to expand in a constant exchange with young female authors.

WOMEN AUTHORS

The body breaks the pattern in Laura's graphic work, often assuming the category of a physiological study in which age, marked joints or menstrual blood appropriate a carnal space that begins in eroticism until reaching the poetic avant-garde limits that challenged her.

Mamen is a free, independent body with her own voice, a new, sincere and natural body that changed erotic perspective and exposed the male gaze upon her. Mamen incorporated her groundbreaking voice into the centre of the male chauvinist, masculine humour of the Spanish mainstream market of recent years.

The appropriation of the body in Laura's work accepts the experimental commitment running through the erotic space, from sex to the poetic sociology of emotions, in order to shift the gaze that reaches fear and confrontation in life with the limited time of love and death. The body welcomingly expands with the emotional trauma of the poet, formulated as uninhibited or encapsulated, allowing us to glimpse the other side of the erotic mirror.

Marta Guerrero's scripts place her in the classic eroticism that defines the magazine *El Víbora*. Her transgression lies in the very fact of being a woman and working this genre in a space dominated by the male perspective.

Miralles' women are graphically powerful because they maintain their own position, beyond that of the text. While her role models create ingenuities aimed at feeding the erotic imaginary of male eyes, the author gives her women a human gaze, playing with chiaroscuro, shadows, tattoos and hair to delicately clothe eroticism on the skin of a naturally naked icon that is solidly placed on the stage, giving her the autonomy and capacity to challenge readers.

Sex as a mental construction, the divided body, the body in transit, the body that shatters labels and dismantles gender... The body that asks us to listen to hidden voices