

# Morgenglanze

**Xavier Éloïse Gorgol Steimetz**

It was the first time I could talk to and meet loneliness. I was alone in a city, far from my emotional ties. In 2010, 2011, I had distanced myself from the people I had met during the school years that brought me to Brussels. I was also leaving a Belgian guy with whom I had been in a love relation for 2 years. I was living with a dog who still shares my life now: Kawaii.

We used to go to the Belgian beaches. I had never lived so close to a large body of water. They have always fascinated me. I quickly realized that there was a certain interest for me to be alone at the sea, on the beach. Thinking, meditating, reflecting and drawing on what I see and what goes through my head were the practices. Asking the past started to take part in my artistic research. I started to put on paper my researches and discovers. Started to interview, without them knowing clearly why, my mum, family and friends, in order to collect. I also got into my archives and got elements: visuals or written that would be used in the future.

It all started a few years earlier from now, when I attended a course on illumination at the school I had attended when I arrived in Brussels. Illumination is a process that brings to light writings through drawings and vice versa. Illumination resonated with me, at the time, as a magical act that needed to be practised.

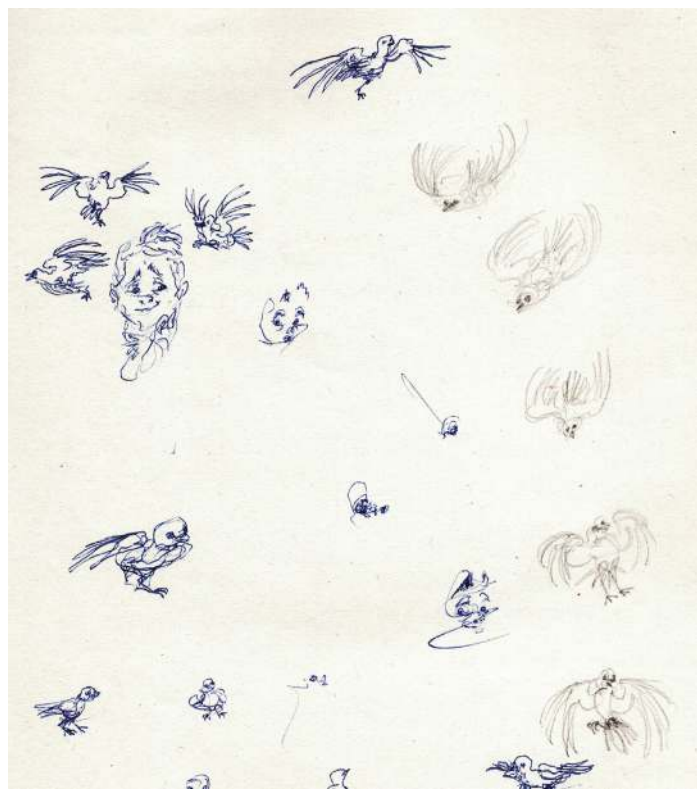
During my schooling in Belgium, my work was described as “mawkish/mièvre” (of a childish and bland grace). The epithet is negative at first—by the reaction I took back what it represented and appropriated it. I then began the work towards my childhood, on what seemed to attach me to it and why I wanted to continue drawing.

At first, I went back to the drawings done when I was younger. Going through the characters I had created, I looked for recurrences: the transformation of human bodies towards the bird or halfway between the two—the succubus was a figure that was repeated in my archives, from fictional characters to self-portraits. Also, the vegetal or natural elements that surrounded the invented characters defined or situated them in their living spaces. Later in life, I got interested in the figure of Ganymede: a young Trojan prince kidnaped by Zeus, in the shape of an eagle to make him his lover: we find human and bird elements. He passes from human prince to cupbearer of the gods, then under the pressure of Hera, jealous of this new liaison, instead of sending Ganymede back to the mortal world, he is raised to heaven in the form of the constellation of Aquarius. The story has 3 high points, 3 transformations towards a new living space of development—the importance of the myth lie for my interpretation in these distinct phases which change both the corporality of the character, as well as his function and the way he can be seen.

*The Red Book* (2009) interested me primarily as an aesthetic object, the development of the images



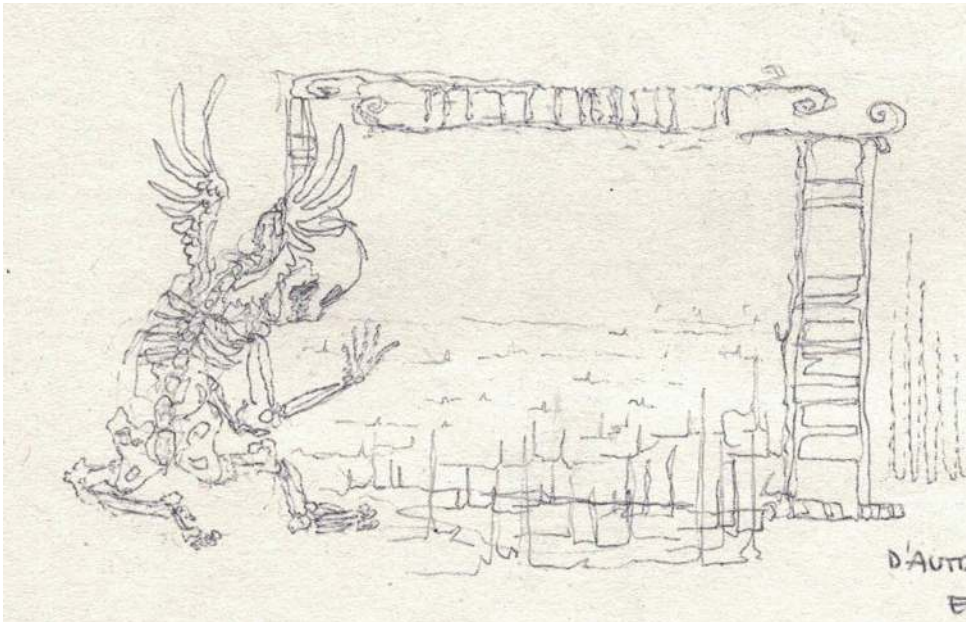
Early sketches of the human-bird hybrid figure in transformation.



and the conclusion in the form of a mandala were my first inspirations for the attempt to storyboard “Morgenglanze.” At that time, I only knew psychoanalysis or its authors by name and for having practised it with a few psychologists or seen it in a few documentaries. What I discovered in the work of Carl Gustave Jung’s *The Red Book*, through my research, brought me ways of seeing and undertaking work, a practice to better grasp the mechanisms of the psyche. My practice developed on the invocation of what I was caring, curses or blessings, at this period. K. G. Jung was both the object of reference and the doctor, and I tried to do the same in this practice, I was representing myself as a healer. It is not easy to write about your past without falling into the trap of judging who you are at the time of writing. This practice was the main tool of my research to probe the things that appeared to me, in and outside of the moment of remanence.

The writing of the anime was done by layering, a kind of compost. The main body of the animé is formed in this way. On the other hand, in the end, the transformation of the animated skeleton into a rotoscopic skeleton echoed the mandalas at the end of *The Red Book* and brought a spiral (the most appropriate form to tell my story) and the possibility of a sequel to this first animé. The skeletons of the end conclude on the need to renegotiate with the divine. The privilege of those who are possessed is that of diversifying the possible and starting the movement from taking a stand to transformation, continuously.

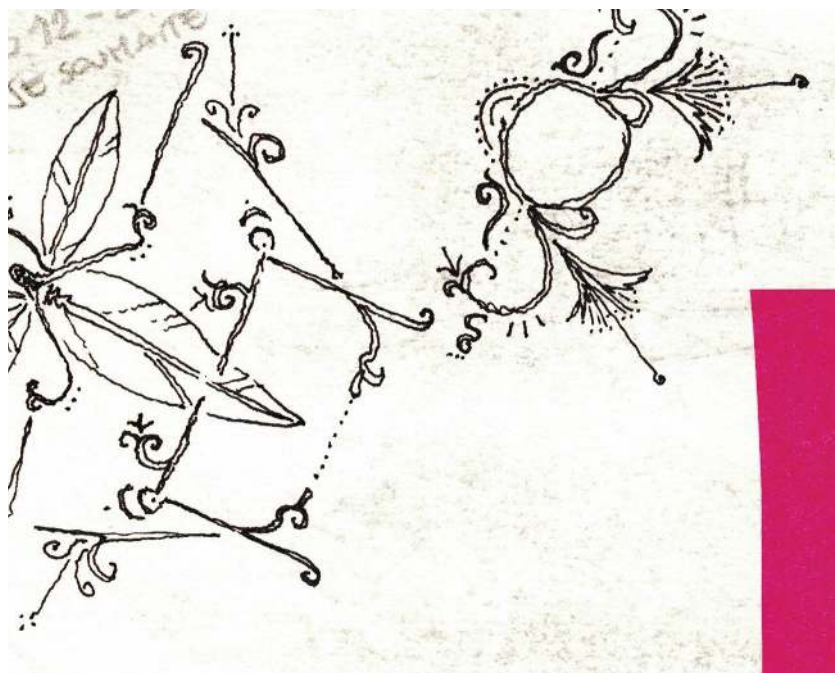
The incipit of the project hatched with the choice of the greeting cards to be sent that year: the transition from 2010 to 2011. With this new year, I started to take an interest in my teenager drawings, and I was scribbling around a character who was half-bird, half-human. In fact, only his head is human. I draw this character from different angles, and I started animating him—from animation practice characters come true. This strange bird was a bit of a self-portrait. Animation



Taking back the “mawkish” allows for a re-engagement with the inner child.

depends mostly on the film market and the age sectors that market gives it.

My animés are usually not films, even if I can animate with sound and supported by a linear narration, like animation, I like to reinvent me as often I can. For “Morgenglanze,”<sup>1</sup> the desire to work with animation and its capacity of creating from scratch remained my goal during the creative stages. I chose to bypass editing and cutting, to keep all the possibilities, open throughout the narration. The story of this bird that transforms into a human play with time and rhythm, the character has no fixed model sheet. The different elements were found and put in the form of an “animatic” storyboard on video. The connections between them were part thought and imagined before, but most of the work of 4 to 6 months I did over the animé, was an improvisation through the story. Intentionally alone on the work of this animated project, my dear friend Daniela Wayllace, animation director too, was supporting me.



Pattern created “from scratch” superse-  
de linear narrative in their metamorphic  
transformations.

Once upon a time, there was a girl (my remembrance started with this) who transformed into a beautiful non-gendered person. From this period on my trans\* identity emerged. It revealed itself first by intuition from this representation. In my first years in Brussels, I acquired Monique Wittig's "The Straight Mind" (1979) and Sam Bourcier's *Queer Zone*, volume 1 (2001), which I was reading by chapters to assimilate them. After Paul B. Preciado's lecture for Trouble festival in Brussels at the beginning of 2011, I met with the people from Genres Pluriel.le.s, an organisation for the visibility and protection of trans\* and intersex people. I, then, was revisiting my story through the angle of the T of the LGBT, that I never really knew before what it would refer to. Queer was like making a phew! when I start using it in the glossary of my identities I felt allowed to continue on my way of experimentations.

The practices of cartoon give me the same feeling like this "phew," a kind of a relief because we can undertake any transformations, appearances, set in motion in a space that adapts to our desires, realities, experiences. Characters, environments, ambiances, props, etc. go to the rhythm of calculated or unconscious choices on a story that is told or that develops in a "dilettante." The Queer tension is found in the practice of cartoon as much as in the narration: the two main parts of my work. The alteration of the model becomes a choice to illustrate a moment of delirium for example, or to tell a kind of human fable, to stop on a detail of the lived feelings rediscovered in my body memories or to let a plant imposing minerals to act like clouds of birds.

"Morgenglanze" confirms the fluctuating nature of identity and tends to want to dwell on its transformations to replay them and keep them alive. As a fable, I intend to exploit this project nowadays as a pedagogical tool. It will be developed in three parts following the number and the functions of the elements interacting in the animé: the character, the setting and the atmosphere. Animation practices and Tai Ji have a lot in common. For the character part of this pedagogical tool, for example, I'm interested in the body positions, caring for it, connected to the action lines practised in keyframes animation. Walking is another common point. I'll use to bridge the practices: delay, weight, rhythm or tempo are keywords for both. What brings them even closer for me is the need in animation as in Tai Ji to be attentive. Aware of what we achieve, what we tend towards, what we choose. This awareness is necessary for all human persons, but even more so for smaller and younger human beings, so that they can lay the first stones on their paths.

## Notes

1. Xavier Eloïse Gorgol Steimetz, "Morgenglanze." Depuis 2010, j'accumule des animations, dessins et interviews afin de poursuivre ce travail en forme de journal intime animé qui utilise l'animation 2D - fin 2020 devrait voir la sortie de la partie suivante. Morgenglanze, cette première partie animée, a été proposée en 2012, et entre autre projetée au festival Pink Screen, festival de film QUeer bruxellois. Je suis une personne trans\* (iel elle) et je travaille avec la narration, les identités et la transmission/le partage des savoirs personnels et situés.