
THE LIMINAL SPACE: A STUDY OF SEXUAL AMBIGUITY IN
SELECT QUEER NARRATIVES

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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MZU REGN. NO. 1023 of 2007-08

PH.D. REGN. NO. MZU/Ph.D./964 of 26.05.2017



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

NOVEMBER, 2021

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Submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

November 2021

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “The Liminal Space: A Study of Sexual Ambiguity in Select Queer Narratives” written by C. Lalrinzuala for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in English has been written under my supervision.

He has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. The thesis incorporates the student’s bona fide research and that these have not been submitted for award of any degree in this or any other University or Institute of Learning.

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DECLARATION

I, C. Lalrinzuala, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to my supervisor Prof. K. C Lalthlamuani who made this work possible. Her guidance and advice carried me through all the stages of writing my project. I would also like to thank the faculty members and fellow research scholars under the Department of English, Mizoram University.

I would also like to give special thanks to my family as a whole for their continuous support and understanding when undertaking my research and writing my project. Your prayer for me was what sustained me this far.

Finally, I would like to thank God, for letting me through all the difficulties. I have experienced your guidance day by day. You are the one who let me finish my degree. I will keep on trusting you for my future.

I dedicate this thesis to my late great grandfather Rev. Liangkhaia and my late grandfather Upa. Lalnaa.

Date:

Place: Aizawl, Mizoram

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CHAPTER 1

Introducing the Liminal

Historically, the word “liminality” has been derived from the Latin word *limen* which means “threshold”. It is a space of transition, an in-between state or space characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, and hybridity, which has the potential for subversion and change. As it is a transitory space it serves as a temporal border and in relation to narrative it is often colligated with events that are life-changing.

The concept of liminality was first introduced in 1909 by the ethnologist Arnold van Gennep in his seminal book *The Rites of Passage*. Here Gennep made a reference to a state of ‘in between-ness’ during two important rites humans pass through: cultural and religious rites. In short, rites of passage are a special kind of ceremonial act accompanying a person going from one social space to another which connects to different phases in life (Gennep1-3). The various ceremonies consist of phases like birth, puberty, marriage etc. Each rite then consists of a territorial passage like crossing a threshold. According to Gennep:

The passage from one social position to another is identified with a territorial passage, such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares. (192)

Apart from giving a theoretical definition of liminality, *The Rites of Passage*, also exhibited its role in the process of seasonal changes and also in the course of change of the individual lifestyle. Gennep is of the opinion that rites of passage, is an essential attribute of any type of change which also shows the dichotomy that exists between ‘hardened’ and ‘changeable’ structures.

According to Gennep, there are three phases in the rites of passage namely separation, liminality and incorporation:

I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, preliminal rites, those executed during the transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world post liminal rites. (21)

The first phase of separation is marked by the withdrawal of people from their status in order to relocate from place or status to another:

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group ... from an earlier fixed point in the social structure. (Turner 80)

Individuals in this first phase of “separation” often experience detachment and cutting away from their former self. These experiences are signified by certain actions and rituals.

The second phase or the transitional phase called the liminal is the in-between stage. During this stage, individuals have already left the previous state but have not reached the next. They are situated in the middle.

In the third phase or the incorporation stage, there is a consummation of the passage by the individuals. This stage is marked by the completion of the rite and the individual subjects have assumed “new” identity, re-entering society with a new status. This final stage is characterised by rituals and ceremonies to celebrate the completion of the journey. Thus:

In rites of incorporation there is widespread use of the 'sacred bond', the 'sacred cord', the knot, and of analogous forms such as the belt, the ring, the bracelet and the crown. (van Gennep 166)

Out of the three phases special interest is attached to the liminal stage, the stage located in the middle which is marked by disintegration, obscurity and an individual's detachment from reality. On a larger scale, one can say that every culture and society consist of a space located at the border and the periphery which can also be seen as a

passageway or an in-between space which is also known as the liminal space. However, liminality does not just imply only the in-betweenness, it also connotes a phase and space which every culture as general and every human being in particular has to pass through. It can also be said to be the essential need of human nature.

After half a century later, Victor Turner transfers Gennep's theory of liminality on the realm of structuralistic anthropology. He defines this phase of liminality as an 'inter-structural situation' coming up 'between various positional structures'. Gennep's concept of the liminal assert special attention for Turner as for him, this concept performs the function of a threshold which delimits the various stages in life. According to Turner's view, the temporary withdrawal of a person from a social structure gives that person a social status which is ambivalent and not only that, it frees that person from any laws, norms and rules of behavior. This basically implies that his status is ambivalent and hazy. As M. I. Spariosu rightly said 'Liminality for Turner is a form not only of transitivity, but of potentiality as well' (133), for liminality implies not only isolation from social structures, but the potentialities and possibilities of forming alternative structures. According to Turner:

Attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. (5)

This way, people are pushed towards the periphery and become outsiders, kept at a distance (Turner 98) from the social reality.

Indeterminacy, openness and most of all ambiguity are the three main characteristics one can find in a liminal space. A person's sense of identity becomes blurred and sometimes dissolves which most of the time leads to disorientation. However, as this is a period of transition, this stage opens a way to a new space and experience. This liminal stage may have different effects for different people according

to their experiences and also the way they deal with situations. Analysing the concept of liminality, its geographical accounts and the individual in the liminal space, Julia Kristeva writes:

Instead of sounding himself as to his "being," he does so concerning his place: "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?" For the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic. A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines—for they are constituted of a non-object, the object—constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. He has a sense of the danger, of the loss that the pseudo-object! attracting him represents for him, but he cannot help taking the risk at the very moment he sets himself apart. And the more he strays, the more he is saved. (8)

The concept has been adopted successfully in literary, cultural and post-colonial studies, to circumscribe a being on the margin or threshold, which divides distinct spaces, identities or discourses. Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha talks about the liminal, referring to it as a potentially tumultuous and disruptive in-betweeness.

This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha 5)

In his effort to deal with the "in-between" categories of competing cultural differences in relation to issues of class, culture, and gender Bhabha in his introduction to *The Location of Culture* states:

It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed

'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable? (2)

While supporting Turner's claim that liminality is a limbo, a period of ambiguity which is characterized by humility, seclusion, tests, sexual ambiguity, and *communitas*, Bhabha considers this cultural state as being productive and the cause of the approaching hybrid generation of culture. Not distinguish between the 'effectivity' of colonizers and the 'adoptivity' of the colonized, he states:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation... It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out: 'Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks. The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses.'(Bhabha 3-7)

Taking the concept of liminality to a more subjective, personal and individual level Robert Palmer notes:

An individual who moves to the liminal phase has the potential of an individual, but finds himself in the gap between worlds, or he is a certain medium between the alternative structure of 'here' and 'there' (8).

According to Turner, the temporary detachment of an individual from a social structure transmit to that individual a social status that is ambivalent and also liberates him from the prevalent laws, rules of behavior, and the norms.

In the realm of sexuality, liminality serves as that space in which one goes into a realization of self, an epiphanic moment of self-understanding when it comes to one's physical body and one's understanding of it which may not involve the understanding of others towards the same.

Helene Cixous's theory on the function of the dream becomes significant here. The state of the threshold that produces liminal space gives people the possibility to delve into themselves, introspectively, the ambit of their personal desires. Cixous does this by referring and describing a popular biblical story which involves Jacob's dream ladder. The story involves the father, Isaac sending away one of his sons, Jacob on the ground of deceiving their family. Cixous highlights the fact that Jacob's dream in the biblical story is an event which is made possible only because of the physical travel of Jacob from his homeland which is familiar to him. She goes on to say that for a person to enter into the region and sphere of liminality, a realm of self-discovery, he/she needs to:

Go toward foreign lands, toward the foreigner in ourselves. Traveling in the unconscious, that inner foreign country, foreign home, country of lost countries" (Cixous 69-70).

Cixous addresses and gives importance to this necessity of detachment from oneself, from the familiar environment to discover the foreigner in oneself. All the main protagonists in the works selected for study also goes through this journey of self-realisation and the experiences they had to go through in the process. Liminal space encompasses a space which is physical and also spiritual in nature. This allows the person to visualize him/herself in introspection in an environment which is previously unknown to him/her. Hence, even though the self which they seek may not be foreign,

the environment they are travelling to and the journey itself is foreign. This process is not only a conscious one but also is filled with epiphanic moments marked by a positive air of motivation.

Liminality, hybridity and the third space are more or less the same and most theorist use them interchangeably to address similar issues. The third space is a moment in time where two hostile groups meet and clash and are unable to communicate. It is in this space that identity is formed and this research attempts to locate the liminal identity that is formed in this third space.

This third space finds its beginning with Michel Foucault's terms 'heterotopia' (1970, xix) which was later on used by Edward Soja with a new term 'Thirdspace' (Soja 5) and became popular among many theorists of the time. Bhabha then used it as 'the third space' (Bhabha 54) along with the terms 'interstices and 'hybridity'. As mentioned, this term, 'third space' shares the same meaning and usage as terms like in-betweenness, threshold, hybrid space and also liminality. This research will study the sexually ambiguous characters who are more or less hybrids in a society which is driven by binary system of gender. It will also study their position in the society and how the general attitude of the society towards them along with the intersexuals' journey for self-identification.

When one talks about sexually ambiguous people, it is the intersexual who are mainly referred to and it is these group of people who will be studied in the realm of relevant theories to highlight their situation and their experiences. "Intersexuality" will therefore refer to conditions like Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome and Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, "that lead to bodies having a mixture of male and female parts" (Fausto-Sterling 257).

The term "intersex" did not get a widespread usage in the English-speaking world until the 1950s. Prior to that the intersex persons were mainly referred to and also designated the term "hermaphrodite". However even after the word "intersex" had

acquired more currency, the term “hermaphrodite” continued to be used as synonymous with “intersex”. Today, in the English language, especially in the field of botany and zoology, the term “hermaphrodite” has been used more or less for plants and animals but in languages like German and Danish, the term is still partly used as a synonym for “intersex”.

The term “intersex” is primarily taken from Greek mythology. According to the myth, Hermaphroditos, who was the son of Aphrodite and Hermes was merged with a nymph called Salamakis. This fusion made Hermaphroditos possess traits of both male and female sexes (Zajko 189). Apart from the term “hermaphrodite”, another term that is closely associated with the intersexuals and which is often used in place of it is the term “androgyny.” The term “androgyny” is taken from two ancient Greek words “andros” which means man and “gyne” which means woman. The term is basically the combination of masculine and feminine into a form that is ambiguous and is mainly used to denote people that evince both the male and female characteristics. However, when it comes to the relationship between the concepts of intersex and androgyny, there is no definite definition as to their commonalities and differences. Also, many intersex persons choose to use androgyny to define their self-image and self-concepts in various ways and intensities while there are also some who prefer to not use the concept at all (Rosselli 13-17).

In *Symposium*, Plato’s Aristophanes narrates a story about three original types of people; who were spherical and each had two bodies attached to one another. One had two male bodies attached together, another had two female bodies attached to one another and the third had one male body and one female body attached together which means they were androgynous. According to the story, due to some violation on the divine will, these dual-beings were divided into two halves by the gods, and from that moment on, these halves began to develop a sexual desire compelling them to search for their lost second halves. It can be said that, here, Plato expressed that homosexuality

was “normal.” For the first time, he talked about the third, a term which is often used for intersexual in today’s context. (Plato 18-21)

The term “intersexuality” was used for the first time by Richard Goldschmidt, a German geneticist in one of his publications in English language in 1917 (Goldschmidt 1917) Goldschmidt used the term as “Intersexualität” in his German language publications. (Goldschmidt 1931) Due to these publications, this expression became accepted widely, not only in the English but also in the German speaking world. The term has also become popular in the field of medical discourse. The term came to existence when Goldschmidt combined two Latin words, “inter” which means “in between” and “sexus” which means “sex”. In today’s world with the surfacing of various sex and gender related identities and the vast numbers of various self- concepts of different individuals, the term “inter” becomes a more inclusive term and is used frequently in many political and social scenarios. However, the usage of the prefix “inter” still does not call into question the common understanding of the binary model of the “existence” of only two sexes. In international medical discourse, the pathologizing term “disorders of sex development” (DSD) has been increasingly used in place of the term “intersexuality” or sometimes the word “disorder” would be replaced by less pathologizing terms like “differences” or “divergences” (Klöppel 2; Diamond and Beh 4-5; Reis 535–543).

The selected texts for study namely *Annabel*, *Middlesex*, *Herculine Barbin* and *Golden Boy* deal with protagonists who were born as hermaphrodites or intersex and their situation in a gender binary society where they occupy a space of liminality, an in-between space. They had to take the journey of self-realisation because of their sexual ambiguity while at the same time attempting to deal with the pressure from society and the hardest of all, their family.

Annabel (2010) by Kathleen Winter, an award-winning Canadian author, talks about a child who was born a “true hermaphrodite” (Winter 236) in early March 1968 in a small village of Croydon Harbour, located on the southeast coast of Labrador. It tells

the story of how the child grows in the society with his confusing gender identity and the struggles he went through because of it. The most mind-boggling experience but at the same time epiphanic moment for him came when the doctor who defined his condition informed him: “it means you have everything boys have, and girls too. An almost complete presence of each” (Winter 236). The novel challenges the discourses of science, religion and law that have helped in the relative silence about intersexuality in Canadian and other English-language literatures.

The novel opens with a prologue that is about the death of two characters, Graham Montague, a blind Labrador trapper, and his daughter, Annabel. This death serves as a prolepsis to the main protagonist’s rebirth much later in the novel. *Annabel* depicts two Annabels: Graham and Thomasina’s daughter who drowns and Wayne, Threadway and Jacinta’s son whom Thomasina secretly calls Annabel. The beginning of the novel marks the death of both Annabels: one who drowns in the Beaver River, and the other because his parents chose to hide his intersexuality from the world.

The story narrates the life of the protagonist’s early childhood to adolescence with all the physical and mental changes that occurred during the most important stage of his life. Wayne was born in the year 1968 as an intersex child. However, due to his son’s intersexuality, Treadway, the father compelled with the feeling “to make a decision one way or the other,” decides that Wayne is “going to be a boy” and asks his wife, Jacinta to take Wayne to Goose Bay General Hospital (Winter 29-30). The doctor at the hospital measures the length of Wayne’s penis with a phalometer, the result of which becomes the confirmation of Treadway’s decision: the penis is long enough, so the “true sex” of Wayne must indeed be male (Winter 50-52). Wayne’s natural anatomy does not fit into the binary norm of gender; however, medical science makes it fit by following what Alice Dreger called a “monster approach” (Dreger 33). Although there was no proof that Wayne would die without the medical procedures done to him when he was born, still he was lied to and made to live without knowing his true identity. He is made to grow up as a boy when in reality he is both male and female. It is only when

he attains the stage of young adult that he “become[s] who he had been when he was born” (Winter 370).

A perfect epitome of a bildungsroman story, it talks about the loss of innocence through experience. Born an intersex, he was faced with the issue of identity and the crisis of it right from his birth. To complicate matters further, his mother encouraged his feminine side while his father was very much opposed to it. Personally, he wanted to be accepted as female but the world determined his fate when it decided that he should be a boy. While growing up, Annabel subtly rebelled against the gender binary in her own way but unfortunately her father became the resistance as he desperately wanted to have a son. He forced her to do away with her feminine side and not to encourage it. After being forced to be separated from Wally, coupled with his miserable relationship with his father, Wayne could finally set himself free from these bondages to renew the two things he found most important to him: his true identity and his relationship with Wally.

Middlesex (2002) is written by Jeffrey Kent Eugenides, an American born novelist, essayist and also a short story writer. In the year 2003, he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and came to be known as a postmodern icon among the contemporary writers. It became a bestseller in no time and sold more than four million copies. It was also featured in Oprah’s Book Club in 2007.

Although the book is not an autobiography, it is loosely based on certain facets of the life of Eugenides and his views on the Greek heritage. Eugenides was inspired to write this novel by his reading of *Herculine Barbin*, a 1980 memoir which left him dissatisfied with how the book discussed the issue of intersex physical body and human emotions.

The novel deals with the theme of rebirth, the societal construction of the polar opposites such as male and female and nature versus nurture among many underlying themes. Francisco Collado-Rodríguez writes:

Eugenides offers in his novel a kaleidoscopic revision of twentieth-century U.S. history that compels him to reinterpret the American Dream. Following a double critical line of contemporary border and queer views, as well as updated discoveries in evolutionary biology—explicitly presented in the book—the author draws a sustained parallelism between race, identity, and gender and sex identity. (Collado-Rodriguez 73)

The novel also incorporates allusions related to Greek mythology; there is a mention of creatures like a half-man half-bull Minotaur and a monster with many animal parts called Chimera.

Middlesex can be regarded as one of the most discussed works which traces the family saga and the life of a 41-year-old Greek-American, Cal Stephanides, an intersex by birth. The novel is about him looking back on his life as a girl and later as a man. He was born as Calliope with a 5 α -reductase deficiency¹ and later decided to live as Cal as this for her is her ‘truth’. The novel follows the life of Cal with the conflicts and problems of his existence during his puberty and also during his exile to San Francisco. The book, therefore with its unconventional subject holds a very important position in the realm of intersex literature. Cal traces his family tree saying, “this rollercoaster ride of a single gene through time. Sing now, O Muse, of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome” (Eugenides 1). Being the bearer of the mutated gene, Cal narrates the story of his family’s immigration to America and how they acculturate with their new situation and the assimilation process into the new world. Book One of the story centers around the life of Lefty Stephanides and Desdemona Stephanides in the year 1922. Their parents were unfortunately the victims of the devastating Greco Turkish War leaving the siblings, Lefty and Desdemona to make their living with the cocoon business. They later got married and fled to America through the turmoil caused by the

¹a genetic disorder in which males exhibit external genitalia that typically resembles that of females but in which some secondary sex characteristics (such as an increase in muscle mass and descending of the testes) develop during puberty. www.merriam-webster.com/medical/5-alpha-reductase%20deficiency

Fire in Smyrna. Book Two talks about their adjustments in America still clinging to their Greek traits. Book Three is about the childhood and the growing process of the protagonist, Cal as a female, Calliope which is made to run in parallel with the ongoing tension that went on between the races in Detroit, America. Finally, Book Four sees the female Calliope as a male Cal Stephanides and his journey in life with his new male identity.

Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-century French Hermaphrodite is a memoir discovered by Michel Foucault during his research work on hermaphroditism for his book *History of Sexuality* (1978). Translated into English in 1980, it basically talks about the life of a hermaphrodite, Herculine Adélaïde Barbin during the nineteenth-century.

The memoirs are the only source of information one can have regarding the life of Barbin. She was born as an intersex in Saint-Jean-d'Angély, a little town in France in 1838. Upon birth, she was immediately assigned as a girl and raised with the name Alexina. Even though they were poor, she fortunately received a charity scholarship which enabled her to study in a convent.

Alexina considered herself as an unattractive person but that did not stop her from having crushes at school. At school she had a crush on an attractive girl from a much higher class than her and at other times she would slip secretly into her friend's room for which she was punished. In spite of everything, she successfully completed her schooling and her excellence in learning led her to study at Le Château to become a teacher in 1856.

Physically, Barbin's internal organs failed in development like other normal girls. Even after being in the puberty stage, she did not menstruate, there were noticeable facial hair and her chest remained flat. Despite her situation and condition, she always managed to find love which suggests that she is a person who craves for love and acceptance from the world around her. When she was given the post of an assistant

teacher in a girl's school in 1857, she immediately fell in love with another female teacher named Sara.

Barbin always had problems regarding her health, maybe mostly because of her condition. At one point, her pain was so intense entailing her body to be examined by a doctor. Upon examination, the doctor was shocked and insisted that she be moved from the school which she failed to oblige initially.

Not being able to keep her secret any longer, Barbin confessed to the Bishop of La Rochelle, Jean-François-Anne Landriot who with Barbin's permission had to go against his duty to reveal her confession to others so he could send her again to a doctor for a more in-depth examination. Dr. Chesnet carried out the examination in 1860 and discovered that Barbin's body type was very masculine even though she had a vagina but smaller than normal along with a small penis and a testicle located inside her body. So, in other words and to borrow the medical terms of the 20th Century, she was a male pseudohermaphrodite.

Later, the court officially declared that Barbin was a male and should live, be treated and seen like so:

So, it was all over. According to my civil status, I was henceforth to belong to that of the human race which is called the stronger sex. I, who had been raised until the age of twenty-one in religious house, among shy female companions, was going to leave that whole delightful past far behind me, like Achilles, and enter the lists; armed with my weakness alone and my deep inexperience of men and things. (Barbin 89)

The press report stated:

One day some chance circumstance gives rise in your mind to doubt; an appeal is made to medical science; the error is recognized; and a court delivers a

judgement that rectifies your birth record on the civil status registers. (Barbin 146)

As a result, he left his job at the school and also his lover. Henceforth referred to as Camille or Abel Barbin, he moved away to Paris to start a new life. There, being very poor and without any proper job, he began writing his memoirs mainly as therapy for his internal convulsion. The book highlights the inner turmoil and his disheartened feeling because of his condition. He constantly had “ridiculous inquisition” as he “saw myself the object” (Barbin 93). He somehow had hopes for himself as he planned for his departure to Paris. Morgan Holmes, after examining the memoirs concluded that Barbin saw herself as an “exceptional female” (Holmes 6)

Barbin committed suicide by inhaling gas from the stove in February 1868. The concierge found him dead in his Paris house with his memoirs beside his bed. Apart from the inner disorientation which intensified after his transition, the amalgamation of problems like poverty, gender, sexuality and also the false identity he was given surmised as the main reasons that led him to take his life.

His death was reported by Dr. Regnier who performed an autopsy on the body. He was the one who recovered the memoirs written by Barbin and later gave it to Auguste Ambroise Tardieu. Initially Tardieu did not publish the memoir in full but only excerpts of it in his book in 1972 under the title “Histoire et souvenirs d'Alexina B.” which when translated means “The Story and Memoirs of Alexina B.”

Michael Foucault in 1970s discovered the memoirs of Barbin and republished the journals with the current title commenting that this was “a happy limbo of a non-identity” (xiii). Oscar Panizza also wrote a short story adaptation of the book which Foucault included in his version.

In his introduction to the book, Foucault talked about social institutions and their main objective which in his opinion curbs “the free choice of indeterminate individuals” (Foucault viii). He furthered his points with regards to hermaphrodites stating that

during the Middle Age these hermaphrodites were seen as people with mixture of both masculine and feminine traits. Upon reaching adulthood, they were given permission to choose between male and female sex. However, later when scientists decided that a person can have only one “true” gender, the Middle Age procedure was given up. Even when a certain individual showed traits supposed to be that of the opposite sex, the deviancies were considered unimportant. In *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory* (1989) Elizabeth A. Meese and Alice Parker states how the memoirs of Herculine Barbin are relevant in contemporary society regarding gender ambiguity:

The memoir affirms society's stubborn insistence that gender ambiguity violates the truth. It likewise illustrates the persistence of the secret of sex as a mysterious enigma that escapes the viewer and the viewed, subject and object. The notion of a "true sex" operates at such a fundamental level that only by positioning one's self on the margins through violent removal, are we able to see and attack the pervasive encoding of sexuality through ideologies of gender, heterosexism, the family, the state and the church. (Meese and Parker 6)

Golden Boy (2013) is a heart-breaking novel by Abigail Tarttelin, a writer and an actress. She also holds the position of book editor in a UK magazine called Phoenix. *Golden Boy* received the Alex Award in 2014 and also was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in the year 2014. A coming-of age novel, Tarttelin employs multiple-perspective narrative style to depict various complexities of identity and its convergence with sexual violence that enables the reader to understand the fragmented situation and life of the protagonist Max which is marred by layers of secrets. In *Golden Boy*, through the voices and perspectives of Max, his parents, his little brother Daniel, his doctor, and his girlfriend, the readers are made aware of the often-unspoken realities predominant in the story and in everyday life— intersexuality and rape.

Max Walker, is an attractive, intelligent and athletic boy. He is more or less the epitome of the perfect son who is really nice to everyone including his little brother. He is in short, the golden boy.

The initial part of the book gives a graphic description of the 16-year-old Max being raped by his best friend, Hunter who took advantage of his intersexuality. This incident sets the stage for the whole story as it is from here that everything falls apart for the Walkers.

On the surface level, the Walkers seem like the perfect family, the kind of family who seemed to have no internal problems at all. The parents are both successful lawyers with the father running for political office. Max is the eldest son, good looking, athletic, smart and very popular at school whilst his brother, Daniel is a typical boy who plays video games. The mother, Karen tries to uphold the façade of a perfect family which she had successfully maintained for years. However, with her children growing up and her husband's decision to stand for election that year, the façade begins to crumble.

Max has the kind of temperament considered cool and never causes trouble anywhere. He seems more or less perfect, however, the only problem is that, he is not. The Walkers chose to hide the fact of Max's intersexuality and dealt with it nominally. The parents even chose to ignore disclosing the complete fact about his condition to their son, Max. When he was a child, the doctors talked about his gender but no conclusions had been made. His mother, Karen's decision was to embark on a surgery to take out the extraneous parts in order to assign Max as either male or female; his father, on the other hand felt that the decision should be left to Max until he got older to make the decision for himself. So, unable to resolve the issue, they left Max to be a true hermaphrodite, with hormone shots. As he was more boyish and identified as one, they raised him as a "he".

Throughout the story, Tartelin explores various issues; the most obvious one being the question of gender identification and society's attitude towards sexuality.

As mentioned before, using a first-person narrative, the author made each character fill in their point of view in turn throughout the story. One character would start a thread of narrative which would be continued and picked up by other characters.

One of the objective voices in the story, Dr. Archie Verma is among the few characters who do not have any preference as to what Max becomes. She is the one who helps to define the enigma and the conundrum. She questions why a healthy and exalted person under societal pressure be forced to “be normal” and fear “differences” of being “intersex may just ruin their life” and feel “. . . okay as you are, but forced to choose” (Tarttelin 25).

The secret of his intersexuality is never articulated or even discussed within the family circle that Max himself once cried “Dad has never talked to me about being intersex...” (Tarttelin 185). As a result, he struggled with the decision to undergo a “reassignment surgery.” Even though the doctor suggests that surgery is not necessary and says “... you can just be you” the tormented Max replies “I don’t want to be me” (Tarttelin 152).

His mother, being conditioned by the conventional society where parents are afraid for their child to be different, says to him: “I want you to be normal so you can have the best chance at a nice life” (Tarttelin 173). The concept not being different in the society would also guarantee safety. This is evident when Hunter raped him basically because he is different.

The book is mainly about rebelling against the choice that were made for someone by someone else and also about rejecting expectations raised by the society and the family. It also talks about the concept of choice, the lack of power and subverting that power.

Max is in a pool of emotions and questions his condition and the prospect of his future, especially after falling in love with someone for the first time. The biggest question that pervades is his attempt to find his true identity.

What all these selected texts have in common is the fact that they deal with characters who are situated in the disoriented space of the liminal; that they are stuck between two identities. They all have options but neither of the choice is better than the

other and the transition means living a new life with the eyes of the society upon them much like the concept of panopticon by Foucault:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault 202-203)

The study examines the position of these sexually ambiguous characters in the space of society, the space of the family and also the space within their subjective self. As the position they occupy in these spaces is mainly the in-betweens or the liminal, the various disorientation they experience from outside as well as inside themselves are expected occurrences within the framework of the conventional set up since they are what Turner terms the “threshold people” (Turner 95).

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CHAPTER 2

Reconstructing Sex: The Intervention of Medical Science

The complex relationship between intersexuals and medical science often and mostly creates complicated repercussions. With the intrusion of medical science, intersexuals live a life which cannot be termed as “normal” because of the liminal space they are situated in. As mentioned before in the previous chapter, for Turner this stage of liminality is a stage of transition and not a place where one remains in, a place which has to be passed through in order to get back into the structure of the society. A person utilizes this liminal space as a means to redefine themselves in a space which has “few or none of the attributes of the past of coming state” (Turner 94).

However, this liminal space also allows for a place where the conventional understanding can be deconstructed. Michael Joseph states:

Someone whose personhood is liminal lives beyond the pale of society, or structure. For such persons, liminality is neither ritual nor transitional, but an open-ended way of life qualified by sets of cultural demands, ethical systems, and processes that are irreconcilable... outsiderhood and marginality defy reincorporation. (140)

So, these liminal beings, particularly the intersexuals challenge the conventional acceptance of gender. Yang posits, “a liminal situation is characterized by freedom, egalitarianism, communion, and creativity. Freedom results from a rejection of those rules and norms that have structured social action prior to the liminal situation” (383). It is the intersexuals who inhabit this space of liminality which is removed from the conventional gender binary system. Gloria Anzaldúa termed this space as “borderlands” saying that “a border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural

boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (3). The studied intersexual characters defy the recognized gender norms just by being themselves and are coerced to move out of that borderland to be either one of the accepted gender identities.

The selected texts also deal with the role played by the body in the construction of their identity. These protagonists are presented in such a way that they had a negative response to the interruption made to their sacred territory- their body. Judith Butler addresses this issue in her book *Undoing Gender* where she talks about the opposition of “the widespread practice of performing coercive surgery on infants and children with sexually indeterminate or hermaphrodite anatomy in the name of normalizing these bodies” (4). Furthermore, the medical community necessitating the reclassification and the alteration of a person’s gendered identity, exposes the intersexuals to a potential danger on a subjective as well as an objective level. However, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2000) rules out intersexuality under “Gender Identity Disorder”, rather listing it as a “condition in which an individual shows intermingling, in various degrees of the characteristics of each sex, including physical form, reproductive organs, and sexual behavior” (825). Hence, this most probably should exempt an intersex person from the intrusion of medical science. The manual also disregards the common comparison made between intersexual and transsexual or transgender, saying that a diagnosis cross- gender identification “is not made if the individual has a concurrent physical intersex condition” (576) as according to the manual intersexuality is a physical condition. This alone is enough to free the intersexuals from the medical intrusion.

The body is an important faction in the formation of identity for the rest non intersexed individuals. If this is the case then, when the intersexuals’ bodies are altered medically before they reach the age of recognition then it means their rights which has being granted to the rest of the people are being forever taken from them. An intersexual child is then deprived of its ability to construct its own identity together with what it

originally was born with to mark its gender which thereby becomes the catalyst of a disoriented and narrowed sense of self.

Intervention to the body must be seen and employed as a means to preserve the importance of the body since it is an entity and a place where the self originates and where identity is contained. All the protagonists in the select works: Wayne, Max, Calliope and Barbin reacted negatively towards their respective medical communities when intervention was their “only option”. They were more or less like a guinea pig to understand the ambiguous body. Max stated:

... so I kept my mouth shut, while they pried around me, poking me with their stubby, plastic-gloved fingers. I was an interesting case study for them, an experiment. (Tarttelin50)

One could see a drift in their disposition when they were faced with the “inevitable” change that was ahead. This reaction is a representation of the inherent drive to protect the body even though there has been a changing attitude towards gender and its fluidity.

Prior to the thorough medical examination, Barbin was living an ordinary life. The doctor while examining Barbin discovered “ovoid bodies and spermatic cords found by touch in a divided scrotum” (Barbin 128). The doctor said:

These are the real proofs of sex. We can now conclude and say: Alexina is a man, hermaphroditic, no doubt, but with an obvious predominance of masculine sexual characteristics. (128)

After this, Barbin was left with no other option but to change her sex legally and her identity no longer belonged to her as she was, in a way, forced to maintain a new identity. As a result, she was not able to deal with the circumstance she was facing which resulted out of an abrupt upheaval and a sudden change in what she was already familiar with and loved. Her memoir is proof of her immense desperation, shame and

her feeling of isolation; feelings familiar to many intersexuals. In her memoir, she writes:

Go, accursed one, pursue your fate! The world that you invoke was not made for you. You were not made for it. In this vast universe, where every grief has its place, you shall search in vain for a corner where you may shelter your own” (98-99).

This passage shows the amount of pain Barbin was in and it is not surprising that she committed suicide shortly after the only life she knew and was living for the past twenty years had been mercilessly taken away from her. She knew death was coming:

This incessant struggle of nature against reason exhausts me more and more each day, and drags me with great strides toward the tomb (103).

She could not be comfortable to the new male identity she was given. Her knowledge about her physical condition and her attainment of a new identity was the start of a downward spiral for her and the only possible way out for her was to take her own life.

With the general attitude on gender in the nineteenth century, Barbin’s medical condition was not at the least “normal”. As far as gender was concerned, two was the limit of common acceptance and the body was the determining factor, and this is still the case in some places. Barbin’s physical manifestation showed more signs of her being a male and so she was categorized by the court as such. When the court ordered her to embrace her new sex in the name of helping her, she was not prepared for it nor had any support from anywhere. One might think that such reclassification of identity would remove the stigma she had been feeling; on the contrary it created a split between her self-identification which is female and the new identity she was given- man. She even writes about how others around her were affected: “I was aware that my condition was causing anxiety” (39)

Even though, medical science intervened on Barbin's body to rectify her 'problem', she knew that science could do nothing for her as it provided no remedy for her. It was more like a trap for people like Barbin with no other option but to follow the rules of the conventional society in order to be 'acceptable' by them. Foucault writes:

In the Middle Ages, the rules of both canon and civil law were very clear [...] the designation 'hermaphrodite' was given to those in whom the two sexes were juxtaposed, in proportions that might be variable. In these cases, it was the role of the father or godfather (thus of those who 'named' the child) to determine at the time of the baptism which sex was going to be retained (Barbinvii).

The enactment of gender comes with the naming of the child soon after birth. When a child is called a boy or a girl, then, the institution of the church and also law recognised them as so. In *Annabel*, Winter shows the power of a name and how the process of naming is one of the most important aspect of a person's psychological development. Since Wayne was born a "true hermaphrodite" (236), there was a confusion as to the sex which the child is to attain. Jacinta and Thomasina hid the ambiguity of the child's sex from the father, Treadway. However, after sensing something wrong, Treadway soon found out the secret and 'decided' to assign a sex for his child, as for him that was the only option available.

'Since neither of you is going to make a decision one way or the other,' he said, 'I'm going to make it. He's going to be a boy. I'm going to call him Wayne, after his grandfather.' (29)

This assigning and naming of the child is then made official at the christening of Wayne where he was baptised. However, in spite of this official announcement of Wayne's 'true' sex to the world, Jacinta and Thomasina could not fully accept the 'decision' made by Treadway and the medical community.

It's the last moment, Jacinta thought, of my daughter's existence. She looked at the door. Where was her little girl in a sunlit dress? Run to me, quick! But the

door was empty. Jacinta closed her eyes and spoke to Isis in the cathedral window in St. John's. Not Mary. Isis, whose son, Horus, was both child and falcon.

'I baptise you'— Julian Taft took cold water and drew a cross on the baby's forehead— 'Wayne Blake.'... With skill greater than his, Thomasina whispered, 'Annabel,' so low he could hear. Thomasina believed there was power in a name.

The name Annabel settled on the child as quickly as pollen alongside the one bestowed by Treadway. (62)

The medical community made the gender reassignment for Wayne using an instrument called a phalometer. This palometer used is a tiny silver ruler which is etched with a marking at 1.5 centimeteres to determine the sex with which the child is to be raised. When Wayne was born, his "one testicle had not descended... as she (Thomasina) adjusted the blanket she quietly moved the one testicle and saw that the baby also had labia and a vagina" (15-16). The doctor at the hospital informed him, "it means you have everything boys have, and girls too. An almost complete presence of each" (236).His duality is made evident when Jacinta took him to the Goose Bay General Hospital, where Dr. Simon Ho insisted to "create a believable masculine anatomy" (48) for Wayne if his male genitalia meets the mark to make him male.

'We use this phalometer.' He picked up a tiny silver bar from the trolley. It had black numbers on it... 'If the penis reaches or exceeds this length, we consider it a real penis. If it doesn't meet this measurement, it is considered a clitoris.' (50-51)

After the examination, the doctor told Jacinta that, "This baby can be raised as male" because the penis "is the necessary length... It barely grazes one and a half centimetres" (52). This can be said to be the first time Wayne defies classification as

being a ‘true hermaphrodite’, the fact that he could be raised as male does not mean that the potential for him being raised as female is absent.

It may seem that following a strict rule of categorizing to a newly born baby is something which is done only in the Middle Ages but judging from the contemporary procedures, it is evident that this ancient rule seeps through to the present. In this strict rule of categorization, medical alteration is immediately performed on an intersexed child, in order to be in line with the conventional and popular acceptance of gender norms. According to science, this is the only possible and best way for the intersexed child, however, this proves to be debateable from Alexina’s attitude toward the doctor when she recalled her experience:

It displeased me to see him initiate himself into my dearest secrets, and I answered in not very restrained terms certain of his remarks that seemed to me to be a violation. (Barbin78)

Barbin cannot be blamed for her attitude as she did what anyone would do when her identity is about to be altered. She was confused and disoriented as she was about to acquire a new identity not by choice but by force. The extreme internal body pain caused by the infected internals cannot be cured by the alteration done on a birth certificate paper.

The air of ignorance and selfishness that prevailed during Max’s birth in Tarttelin’s *Golden Boy* is a fine example of the role of medical science regarding the assessment of gender to an intersexed infant mainly on grounds of physical appearance. When Karen, Max’s mom narrates the birth of her son, readers are made aware of the lack of knowledge of the medical personnel when it comes to the concept of ‘intersexuality’:

First, they thought it might be one of the diseases that can kill the baby without treatment. I’ll never forget the name: congenital adrenal hyperplasia. They said that the disease could present initially as ambiguous genitalia, then within weeks

the baby could demonstrate poor feeding, lots of vomiting, dehydration. If untreated, it could die. (Tartelin124)

The doctor even continuously referred baby Max as “baby” without using any pronoun as if the intersexed baby unlike other “normal” babies is an inanimate thing, an inhuman entity. Karen thought to herself, “He kept saying ‘baby’, like it was this thing, this monster, this anomaly that didn’t have a soul, a sex, a definition.”

After making a wrong assessment of the baby’s condition, saying it has some kind of a fatal disease, the medical community concluded to operate the baby, the gender on which they again are very inconclusive about. Karen says:

Then, after they had ruled CAH out, they thought he should be operated on to become a girl, because he had a small phallus, and internal sex organs. But we thought he looked enough like a boy. Steve balked at them cutting him up. Then they wanted to give him hormones. They took pictures upon pictures. Later, they thought he should be a boy, because he seemed to identify that way. (124)

From the above extract it is evident that the child’s psyche is not taken into consideration at any point and that conclusion is based only on the physical condition of the body.

Annabel also portrays the ignorance of the medical community in their process of assigning gender. Uncertain of the most suitable sex for the infant; they make “educated guess” when they are faced with a more unique and difficult cases. Explaining the procedure, Dr. Ho said to Jacinta:

‘If the penis reaches or exceeds this length, we consider it a real penis. If it doesn’t meet this measurement, it is considered a clitoris.’ (51)

To which Jacinta asked:

‘What if it’s right in the middle? Right straight, smack dab down the precise centre? One point five centimetres with no seven hundredths.’ (51)

Dr. Ho represents the whole medical community who make it their responsibility to decide for the intersexed child the most suitable sex according to what they deem right using their technology. To the doubts and question of Jacinta Dr. Ho answered:

‘Then we make an educated guess. We do endocrinology tests but really, in a newborn, as far as endocrinology goes, we’re making a best estimate. (51)

Middlesex portrays a time before the birth of the protagonist and the narrator who was born as Calliope Stephanides who later changed to Cal after the discovery of her condition. After this discovery, she decides to go through a transition and live as a male. Choosing to live by her own rules, Calliope recreated her gender assignment by performing gender instead of opting for surgical reconstruction to be socially acceptable. In short, she decided not to conform to the conventional gender norm. Eugenides, through the character of Cal presents an alternative for the intersexuals to embrace their identity which however requires the strength of the individual.

The contemporary world of medical science has a policy of rushing procedures with regards to intersexed child. With recent developments in science and the ability to recreate and reconstruct, there is a growing tendency to “fix” certain things which are not even broken. Calliope’s parents talked about this issue in their conversation: “‘Dr. Phil should have noticed when Callie was born’ [...] ‘This whole thing could have been fixed back then’” (Eugenides 403). Here lies the difference of experiences between Calliope and Barbin; for Barbin the medical facility which could have “fixed” her was absent. There was the conventional society which chose to give her a label. This resulted in the presence of a self-constructed identity which was constantly in conflict with the perceived identity. Calliope on the other hand, even though she too was not surgically reassigned, had the option to choose her identity. When her parents eventually sent her to a specialist, Callie was diagnosed as a “genetic XY raised as a

female” (762). The doctor wanted to put her under a knife and “implement feminizing surgery” (765) to which Callie resented and decided to become Cal. In order to avoid this surgery and hormone treatment, she ran away, cut her long hair and wore men’s clothes. She went to San Francisco to determine a new identity for himself. It is clear from the experience of Cal that intersexed individuals with their ambiguous sex occupy the in-between, the liminal space in the heterosexual matrix from which they have the option of an exit even though for some the decision may not be theirs. Their physical body may not be altered surgically by the medical community and may retain their original form, however, Max and Cal had the opportunity to decide the identity they wished to embrace. As for Wayne, even though medical alteration was done to his body, he embarked on the journey to discover his true self.

Eugenides narrates many aspects of the medical community and their role in the lives of the intersexuals with his use of certain terms and the various procedures practiced. He also highlights the changes that took place as a result of the “treatment” adopted for the intersexed infants. Before the intervention of medical science and its procedures, intersexed individuals were made to reclassify themselves based on their appearances and what seemed to be their “true sex” on the outside as was mentioned in the case of Max. In the introduction to *Herculine Barbin*, Foucault talks about “true sex” stating:

[Western societies] have obstinately brought into play this question of ‘true sex’ in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures” (vii).

The concept of “true sex” contradicts the reality of the intersexuals based on the kind of anatomy they possess. So, the medical community makes it their prime duty to “fix” and “correct” the biological mistake in the intersexual body in order for it to fit into one “true sex” from the two socially accepted genders.

While reassigning gender to the intersexed child, as briefly mentioned, the size and appearance of the genitalia is the only thing taken into consideration and not the psychology. Dr. Ho in *Annabel* articulated this fact: “Penis size at birth is the primary criterion for assigning a gender” (51). A child is considered a boy if the proto-genitalia is an inch and above and it is considered a girl if the apparatus appears to be under three eighths of an inch. In most cases, as it is more convenient for the medical community to remove than to add, most intersexuals are often turned into females. Apart from this convenience, the child’s ability to stand while urinating is also taken into consideration as according to them, a male being unable to stand while urinating is more traumatic than surgically altering the penis to a vagina. It is clear from this fact that the criteria for gender reassignment is heavily influenced by the need to conform to the patriarchal society rather than the psychology of the intersexuals themselves.

Tarttelin uses the character of Dr. Archie to explain the procedure involved in the process involved in gender assignment:

... ‘if a doctor can’t decide whether a newborn is a boy or girl, they can check three things: the sex chromosomes, meaning whether you’re genetically a boy or girl; the gonads, meaning whether you have testes or ovaries; and how the body responds to hormones. Sometimes they do gender assignment surgery straight away. Sometimes it’s necessary, sometimes it’s ... not.’ (149-150)

Dr. Archie further explained to Max how the outside appearance of the body played a huge role in the process in order for the child to be “normal” and socially acceptable saying:

... ‘a lot of the surgery is done on what you have on the outside, which is why many intersex people lose their ability to have babies. When you were born, in the mid-nineties, surgery was getting more refined, and so the doctors still wanted you to have surgery, but instead of wanting to assign you a male gender based on your outward appearance, they advised assigning you a female gender

based on your sex organs. When you were born, you had a vagina. Inside your body you had two gonads. One was an ovotestis, meaning half ovarian tissue and half testicular. As far as I can understand, ovotestis very rarely work, and are thought to be prone to certain tumours, so many doctors choose to remove them. Yours, like many people's was removed shortly after birth. You also had a uterus and an ovary, but you had no testicles at all. (150)

Eugenides dexterously tackles the two concepts of self-discovery and desire. Calliope's family including herself, made the discovery of her reality that she is a male suffering from 5-alpha-reductase deficiency. What this condition actually does is it hides her maleness until puberty suppressing her body which creates complications in the identity formation. Her understanding of the term "hermaphrodite" is what caused Calliope's decision to change her name and live as male in a foreign environment.

The protagonists in the selected texts follow common trends in the acceptance of the liminal space though they undergo different endings. Calliope gave up her identity as a girl and created a new male identity for herself, Cal; Barbin, unable to have the physical male identity committed suicide; while Max, after his life changing abortion, decided to live as an intersex. Acknowledging his dual persona as one cohesive whole, he finally made peace with his own self:

Sometimes I still feel that there are two of me: one clean, flawless picture, the other imperfect and cracked; one boy one girl; one voice that speaks aloud and one that whispers in my ears; one publicly known to have been troubled but be in the mend, the other who has privately lost something to do with innocence and gained something to do with knowledge and adulthood that can never be undone. I feel sometimes there are things that tear me in two directions, that there are two sets of thoughts that grow side by side. But then I realise that I am whole, whatever that means and does not mean; I am complete without the need for additions or alteration. (267)

In the case of Wayne, who refuses to adhere to the sex given by medical science, moves out from his parents' home town to St. John's to acknowledge his femininity. Deciding to discontinue the hormone medication to masculinize him, he allowed his body to go through a natural process of feminization and planned to continue his studies which ultimately made him learn to accept his true self. He made peace with his father, renewed his friendship with his childhood friend, Wally and Wayne finally felt accepted in his new environment:

The other thing Wayne noticed was that among the students he did not feel out of place because of his body's ambiguity, as he had felt on the streets of downtown St John's. (Winter 455)

It is at the stage of puberty that the physical body manifest signs of difference and morphs into a new form. Desire becomes important because it is through sexual desire that people develop awareness of who they are and attempt to determine a gender for themselves. The body plays an important role in identity construction as it is the main cause of the dilemma for intersexuals. When his school teacher, Mr. Henry made sexual advancement, Wayne felt something too. He felt, "Flowers were bursting open between his legs, but the flowers were ugly flowers that he did not like" (107). The sex which the doctors gave him at birth failed him as his desire and body failed to be compatible with the genitalia they 'chose' for him. His encounter with Mr. Henry, made him realise that his body unconsciously and automatically desired him as well without him acknowledging the act in his head.

So he escaped from Mr. Henry, but he could not escape from the fact that a man had wanted him, and that his body had responded to that man with a secret desire of it's own. An exquisite stirring, unwanted, involuntary, mysterious. A child of eleven awakens to sexual ecstasy and keeps it to himself, and thinks for a brief time that he, or she, is the only one in the world to whom this has happened. For a little while Wayne's ecstasy remained hidden, like the bulb of any bloom, underground. (108-109)

The protagonists of the texts are true testaments to show that when an intersexed infant's body is altered surgically to be acceptable and fit into the norm, there is a possibility of a correlation between the self and the body. In order to be socially acceptable and seen as "normal", one must substantiate a gendered identity. However, for Max, Wayne, Calliope, and most of all Barbin, the gendered identity they had to live with was not their decision but was forced upon and not constructed organically. It was delivered to them by the doctors who made the decision as to the sex of the intersexuals and not the patients' and apart from these doctors; society was also responsible in the enforcement of the socially acceptable sexual identity.

Through the intersexual characters, these texts inform the readers the need of the intersexuals to construct their own identity without medical intervention. The only thing the medical science does is literally cutting off the excess skin and removing certain tissues deemed unnecessary. In short, they simply break the intersexuals without building them up again. They intervene in their lives with an aim to release them from the liminal space they are in. However, even though these intersexuals are occupying the liminal space in society by default, what society actually has to do is provide a space for the intersexuals to construct identity for themselves, a space free from outside pressures. There are cultures who successfully provide this kind of space for the third sex. Papua New Guinea and the Dominican Republic are such cultures who cater to the needs of these third sex individuals by offering a space for them in the society. According to Sociologist, Sharon Preves in these cultures:

Children are allowed to go through a natural sex change from female to male at puberty without medical intervention. (40)

Apart from the intersexuals there are other categories under the umbrella of gender identity who have to go through medical intervention in order to be 'normal', at least on the outside. One of these groups are the transgendered people who are basically people whose gender identity and gender expression does not diverge with the accepted gender norms associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. However, it would be

wrong to equate the plight and condition of the intersexuals to that of the transgendered people. In spite of the many similarities, they differ in the sense that the intersexuals do not attempt to identify themselves or fit into one particular gender. Their main aim is to exist as a separate gender like that of transsexuals who without any medical reassignment embraces the presence of maleness and femaleness in them. However, the body of the intersexuals sometimes hinders and restrict them from embodying either gender which is not the case for both transgenders and transsexuals.

One of the main complications that arise with the issue of those occupying the liminal space is that it is not an easy task grouping them as either sex or gender. Most of the time, the genitals, which is used as the main point of determining the biological sex of a baby, are analysed only for a brief moment, thus, neglecting the other conditions which are possibly present. These problems and complications may not arise immediately at birth but they mostly manifest when the child reaches puberty. While these manifested problems can definitely be physical, most of them are psychological. Preves said:

[E]stimates indicate that approximately one or two in every two thousand infants are born with anatomy that some people regard as sexually ambiguous (2).

Preves could not understand why intersexuality is still so stigmatized in the society today while conditions like cystic fibrosis and Down syndromes are seen in a much more different light (Preves 3). When it comes to the intersexuals, medical science is of the opinion that surgery is the only possible option for them. The gender assignment procedure is usually done in such haste that the parents at most times are not informed about the condition of the child. They rush to assign the intersexed child into one of the acceptable genders. This act of medical science makes intersexuality invisible and a condition with which no one should live with. Dr. Archie in *Golden Boy* explained this point clearly when she said to Max:

... ‘You should know that there is, within the medical community and society as a whole, a lack of understanding for issues of gender and sexuality, and in a case like yours, doctors might be too willing to force surgeries rather than help you decide on a gender without surgery. You need to be prepared.’ (117)

In a society where label plays an important role and categorization is a part of the lifestyle, intersexuals also need to construct their gender identity like Max did at the end when he accepted his intersexuality and the duality. For this reason, it is imperative that the intersexuals be made aware of their circumstances as soon as they are able to understand their situation. All the selected works portrays the problems that could arise by ignoring and hiding the symptoms that comes with intersexuality. One may think that surgery is the only viable option for these intersexuals but on the flip side, it exacerbates the problem as it not only affects the physical, but also impinges the psychology of the intersexuals.

The recent advancements in technology and innovative procedures definitely contribute to the increase in the intervention from outside. Apart from this, the fact that lives becoming more public is another massive contributory factor. Butler writes:

In a sense, to be a body is to be given over to others even as a body is, emphatically, “one’s own,” that over which we must claim rights of autonomy. (20)

According to Butler the rights of autonomy should belong to the owner of that body. Then, coerced surgery prior to the age of consent could be for some a form of forced categorization in which the self and the body are not aligned with each other which further could mean that they are stripped of their rights to full ownership.

Performing surgery on intersexed infants mirrors the fact that though the contemporary society has moved far from the ideologies of the Middle Age with its religious and heteronormative attitude, it still has an impact today where most people prefer a new born child to not deviate from the idealized standard of the heterosexual

matrix. These surgeries involve the remodelling and removal of the proto-genitalia in order to make it look more normal. According to Butler, these results in “bodies in pain, bearing the marks of violence and suffering” (53). This forcing to acquire a definitive sex forbid the existence of a third sex or more and it can also be viewed as rejecting the presence of a liminal space in gender. This gave more importance to the fear of the people of the heteronormative space rather than those who could possibly be destroyed by the medical intervention. Today, intersexed people are mostly deprived of their right to live as they are, to celebrate who and what they are and to embrace the overlapping of the dichotomy in them.

Medical communities are viewed as a negative force in the lives of all the protagonists in the selected texts. In *Middlesex*, Eugenides portrays the medical intervention on intersexuals accurately when Calliope was humiliated with interviews and being prodded at the Sexual Disorder and Gender Identity Clinic. Apparently, this is a common occurrence in the lives of these intersexuals. Preves pointed out: “Repeated genital exams are part of medical protocol for assessing intersex patients’ physiological development” (66).

In *Herculine Barbin*, the medical community is not shown in a positive light when an insensitive doctor becomes harsh while dealing with the fate of the poor girl, Alexina. In his disdainful response to Alexina’s mother:

It’s true that you’ve lost your daughter, [...] but you’ve found a son whom you were not expecting. (Barbin 78)

This statement makes it apparent that the idea of reclassification is believed to acquire the power to “fix” anything. However, as mentioned before, there is nothing broken which needs to be fixed and there is nothing wrong in the coexistence of both a daughter and a son in one body. The possibility of this coexistence is evident in the case of Alexina who could live as an intersexed individual for a long period of time.

Golden Boy portrays the ignorance of the medical community especially when it comes to the condition and treatment of intersexuality. It also cleared the fact that medical science has no right to intervene in the assignment of gender, the choice and decision of which is to be done by the intersexuals themselves. Max's statement about the medical community sums up the reality of the medical science in general. He said:

My chest hasn't gown or feminised or whatever dumb term Dr. Flint used. I guess if it hasn't by now it never will, so there's another theory debunked. Doctors know nothing. Well, that's kind of unfair. Let's just say the world is unpredictable. Science is unreliable. It can't tell you who you are or what you'll want or how you'll feel. All these researchers are going crazy in their labs, trying to fit us into these little boxes so they can justify their jobs, or their government funding, or their life's work. They can theorise and they can give you a mean, median and mode, but it's all standardised guesswork, made official by arrogance. You have to be pretty into yourself to think you can play a part in defining the identity of a bunch of people you don't know, of human beings with complicated shits going on in their bodies. They still don't know what certain parts of our brains do, they still don't know how to cure a common cold, and they claim to know about sexuality, about gender. Well, you're not a man because you like football and you're not a woman because you're attracted to men, and you're not a chick because you like to be the one that gives, and you're not a dude because you like to receive or because sometimes you cry at dumb movies. (265)

Annabel tells the readers how medical science tends to use the ambiguity of intersexuals as an experiment, to probe into the 'unknown.' On Wayne's "first real appointment" with Dr. Haldor Carr, "he came in with two more doctors and seven interns. The observers all watched carefully, hoping to learn a great deal from Haldor Carr about a kind of case most interns never got to see" (369). Wayne felt powerless

and wanted to get away but the mistake which the hospital made on him had to be undone and the many questions he was seeking needed to be answered.

Wayne was an exhibit. He wanted to leave the room, but if he did that there would be no way to find out if his body had again become pregnant... [He] felt helpless and angry. He realized the doctor did not know any right or wrong thing to do, and that his motives for deciding were not the same as his own. Haldor Carr had power and Wayne felt powerless. (369- 370)

These texts highlight the availability of medical ‘treatments’ for intersexuality while showcasing its worthlessness at the same time. The texts also highlight the common attitudes the intersexuals share today. According to Butler:

Coercive acts of ‘correction’ undergone by intersexed infants and children[...] often leave those bodies maimed for life, traumatized, and physically limited in their sexual functions and pleasures. (6)

Thus medical intervention is seen in these texts as unnecessary and pointless as this forceful and unnatural assortment does little or nothing to contribute in forming the foundation of one’s identity. In the case of Barbin, the repercussion of the medical intervention was certainly more harmful and traumatic than the time before she was diagnosed and was uncertain about her condition. She even said, “Science can’t explain me” (Barbin39). Science tried to explain her but failed; the only thing it did was objurgating her from her own life. Similarly, in *Middlesex*, Eugenides continuously criticises the medical community throughout the novel by highlighting its fecklessness.

Apart from these texts, many scholarly pursuits have focused on the role played by the medical community in identity formation. Foucault, in his *History of Sexuality* (1976) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1989), explains the negative impact of medical science on sexuality. He describes how medical science has no right to intrude on such a personal aspect of the human development, as it harms individuals who underwent procedures, like that of the intersexuals. He said, “Knowledge invents the Secret”

(Foucault 201). The medical community with its various procedures gives more importance to appearance rather than the truth. This is apparent in the way they treat the intersexuals; an intersexed child who appears to be male outwardly will be treated as such. Foucault points out the incompetence of the scientific community, saying:

Doctors would once again be able to control their own recruitment; they would be reconstituted as a body capable of defining their own criteria of competence (93).

Also, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault criticises the field of medical science saying that it is:

... made up of evasions since, given its inability or refusal to speak of sex itself, it concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements, and morbid aggravations. (53)

While talking about knowledge, science, and visibility, Foucault describes how knowing something can bring about repression and subjugation. For example, knowledge can create an urge for the doctors to alter intersexed individuals surgically and reclassify them according to the acceptable societal norms which in turn makes the intersexuals aware of their condition. What medical knowledge also does is that it aggravates the ‘abnormality’ of intersexuals which puts them in the space to be seen as a deviation from the normal. For these reasons, the ‘normal’ people are influenced negatively regarding their knowledge about intersexuality.

In *Middlesex*, psychological understanding is given more prominence and power over medical science. Calliope’s grandmother had this ability to accurately predict the sex of babies, way before they were born. Calliope describes: “Up until now Desdemona had had a perfect record: twenty-three correct guesses” (5). Then, she explains the prediction process that went on before her birth which says a lot about her actual condition: “After some hesitation, the spoon swung north to south, which meant I was going to be a boy” (6).

The conversation between Calliope's father, Milton and Desdemona represents the relation between intuition and science; it is also an accurate representation of the opinions of people debating over surgery on an intersexual child:

[H]e marched into the kitchen to tell his mother that, this time at least, her spoon was wrong. "And how you know so much?" Desdemona asked him. To which he replied what many Americans of his generation would have: "It's science, Ma" (6).

Throughout the novel, Eugenides consistently criticizes the medical community talking about how unskilled, ignorant, and insensitive the doctors are. The portrayal of Calliope's birth highlights the incompetence of medical science in its intervention. Also, through the voice of Calliope's mother, Tessie, Eugenides presents the offensiveness of the idea of intervening:

To tamper with something as mysterious and miraculous as the birth of a child was an act of hubris. (9)

Medical science has the means to alter the sex of a new born child but does not have the right to do it as a common practice. Altering the body of an intersexed child obstructs the chance for him/her to determine his/her own gender identity. The construction of identity is a process which intersexuals have to go through independent of the body. So, altering the body to wipe out the potential "true sex" from intersexuals on account of what is perceived is to elevate the role of the body in identity formation. Butler in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) writes, "To be a body is, in some sense, to be deprived of having a full recollection of one's life" (38). Thus, it becomes problematic for the intersexuals to fit that body into only one of the two options that are made available; the repercussion of which can be very damaging to the psyche of the intersexuals. For instance, after her involuntary re-categorization, Barbin was unable to live life normally and failed to find life worth living; the alteration done to Wayne's body to make him male caused bodily damages and dire problems as they had to cut

open his female genitalia which they closed off initially in order to take out the menstrual blood which was clogging inside him when he reached puberty. To Butler, consistency is the key in the construction of identity. She goes on to ask:

Where and who is the other and can the notion of the other comprise the frame of reference and normative horizon that hold and confer my potential for becoming a recognizable subject?" (23)

The relationship between the body and self is important for everyone especially for the intersexuals. If the body and the self is not aligned, then, there cannot a complete whole self. Barbin needed to remove herself from her physical body in order for her to be whole. After she shed her skin, only then can she attain the personhood. Similarly, Calliope could not make a harmonious alignment with her body. She first made a psychological shift from female to male, prior to her realization that comes only after her college years. She said, "I tried to forget my body by keeping in motion" (Eugenides 320). Having said this, the need to change and make a shift itself is stressful for the intersexuals. Prior to the gender identity shift they have to deal with all the stress that comes with their condition and they also have to deal with the stress that comes with having a new identity after the shift. Calliope had no connection with her body and she was like a slave to it. She did not understand it as it was not evolving like that of the other girls her age. Recalling her puberty, she said:

Lowering my book, I looked down at my own body, there it was, as usual: the flat chest, the nothing hips, the forked mosquito-bitten legs. Lake water and sun were making my skin peel. My fingers had gotten all wrinkly. (283)

What *Middlesex* does is that it acknowledges the presence of a harmonious intermingling of the two sexes into one body which means that it sees the presence of a complete third entity. Cal acknowledges the presence of Calliope and all the elements that make her unique because it is those exact elements which make him unique too.

There is a mention about Calliope's "crocus" which he recalls fondly as the sensation it gives him are pleasurable:

Sitting in class with a book in my lap or riding home in car pool, I'd feel a thaw between my legs, the soil growing moist, a rich peaty aroma rising, and then—while I pretended to memorize Latin verbs—the sudden, squirming life in the warm earth beneath my skirt. (330)

Although the body plays an important role in the formation of identity, as mentioned before, one cannot ignore the complex relationship the intersexuals have with their body. This creates complications in the formation of identity. The intervention of medical science on the intersexual body is what the selected texts are conspicuously criticizing. They highlight the growing problem which arises for the intersexuals as the medical community make advancement. With every alteration done to the intersexuals' body like removing the excess skin from the genitals of the intersexuals, there is a loss for the intersexuals which the medical community never attempts to give back. This is evident in all the texts selected where the doctors try to take away or make alteration to the body of the intersexual characters.

Resembling the surgery done to intersexuals to that of cosmetic surgery is arguable and questionable as the impact on the patients can be very different because of the difference in the intention. The brutality of intersexual surgery is more or less the same with the female circumcision practiced in the third world countries which is done in order to prevent from experiencing sexual pleasures. The risk done to both is somewhat similar. This sends out the message which is relevant even today; the concept of physical pleasure, conformity to the norms and most importantly the concept of power.

To conclude, one may say the medical community perceives intersexuality as something 'abnormal' and constantly forces it to move out of the space they occupy in the conventional heteronormative set up: the in-between space, the liminal space. The

medical community's attempt to 'break' an intersexual in order to reassign the 'true' sex expose them as not willing to move out from the conventional gender rules which accepts only two. This will be studied in more detail in the chapters that follow. In short, it can be said that this medical intrusion destroys the studied intersexual characters and ultimately lead them to their downfall.

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Chapter 3

Beyond the Binary

Philosopher Beatriz Preciado was bombarded with a gender related question about her identity as man or woman in an interview to *La Vanguardia* (Preciado) to which she replied: “That question reflects an anxious Western obsession [...] with wanting to reduce the truth of sex to a binomial.” The system of the conventional society today permits the presence of only two genders and any deviation from that “truth” is not accepted nor acknowledged.

A fastidious measurement and regulation are implemented and exercised so that the recognized categories of “man” and “woman” would not be disrupted and interrupted. However, there are people who in their natural state cannot be included in one or the other group because of their sexual characteristics. The medical community’s conditions that necessitate them to reassign the sex of an intersexed infant has been mentioned in details in the previous chapter, however, it should be understood that it is not just at birth that ambiguity is established and discovered. The genital organs that seem “normal” at birth may in later years reveal divergence.

Intersexuals defy the sexual binarism physically and for them hormonal treatment and/or surgery is regarded to be a necessary route without any alternatives (Fausto-Sterling 2000a; Dreger2003). Certain technologies are being used in order to “normalize” the intersexual body basically violating it so that it could fit in one of the two available categories (Butler 2004). As mentioned in the previous chapter, these surgical procedures or “violations” are done at an early age which not only leaves scars but also affects the psychology of the intersexuals for it dictates the fate of people who are not given the power of choice. This in turn can lead to serious psychological repercussions (Dreger1998).

It can be said that the medical treatment given to the intersexuals to “correct” and/or “normalize” them rest on both machismo and sexism associated to

heterosexuality. The sexual differentiation is done based on the traditional acceptance where masculinity is associated with activity while femininity with passivity (Preves 26). Further, the main criterion which is employed to base the success of the medical treatment is the patient's ability to have sexual relations with the opposite sex which clearly shows heterosexism (Fausto- Sterling, 2000b). To the medical community, the new sex given to an intersexual should cooccur with the sexual identity associated to that sex. Thus, the treatment is considered a success when it is suitable and acceptable from the heterosexual point of view. The sexual pleasure is not taken into consideration; as long as the sexual relation is in harmony with heterosexuality.

The fact that society at large is still unable to deal with intersexuality proves that the sexual system dominating the world today is not adequate to represent and express the vast array of sexuality. In her article "The Five Sexes" from the journal *The Sciences* (1993), Anne Fausto- Sterling writes:

But if the state and the legal system have an interest in maintaining a two-party sexual system, they are in defiance of nature. For biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male; and depending on how one calls the shots, one can argue that along that spectrum lie at least five sexes—and perhaps even more. (21)

The presence of intersexuality evidently disrupts the traditional binary models like man/woman, male/female and even heterosexual/homosexual. There are also two common types of hermaphrodites: true hermaphroditism and pseudohermaphroditism. Jodi Heier defines the two kinds saying:

True hermaphroditism is the rarest of all intersex conditions, and people who fall into this category are born with both ovarian and testicular gonadal tissue... True hermaphroditism is a different condition than pseudo hermaphroditism, which presents with a gonadal and chromosomal make-up of one distinct gender, and the external genitalia of the opposite gender. The causes of pseudo

hermaphroditism include congenital adrenal hyperplasia, prenatal exposure to anabolic steroids or progestin, or in the case of the much less common male pseudo hermaphroditism, an autosomal recessive genetic defect. (3)

Apart from the two common types of intersexual, there are many other unclassified types which are all within the scope of intersexuality. This makes obtaining and recording an accurate and reliable percentage of intersex births difficult. Dreger writes:

It is not possible to provide with any great certainty a statistic of the frequency of births in which the child's sex falls into question [...]. Such a statistic is always necessarily culture specific. (2003, 40-42)

If a body appears to be ambiguous, there is a fear that that body would destabilize the social organization. In order to fit the ambiguous body into a normal pattern of sexual difference, technology or any other means are utilized to 'correct' the 'wrong.' They are expected to be unassertive and productive like the "docile bodies" Foucault talks about:

La Mettrie's *L'Homme-machine* is both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of *dressage*, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. (2001, 136)

The study of intersexuality, then, branches out from the exclusive sphere of medicine to area like queer studies, feminism, anthropology and sociology.

Talking about the liminal space and position the intersexuals occupy in the society Foucault (2003, 68-71) writes that the "hermaphrodite monsters" during the Middle Ages and the initial part of the 17th century were unfortunate because they were burned alive for possessing the two sexes as compared to those in the 18th century who were lucky to be alive in a more understanding era. The end of the 17th century saw the end of conviction exercised on hermaphrodites; however, people having sexual

relationships with the same sex were convicted. Behaviour was the main factor for the conviction and no longer the nature of the body. This shift happened when hermaphrodites were given permission to choose either one of the sexes more compatible with their sexuality.

Foucault opined that classification and regulation of sex started with the coming of the 18th century. According to him it was during this period that the interest in the field of sexuality flourished and that “the ancient right to *take life* or *let live* was replaced by a power to *foster life* or *disallow* it to the point of death” (Foucault 1978, 138) in the name of controlling the life of the population. The 19th and 20th century saw further multiplication in the discourse on the issue and also “perversions”. Sexuality was regimented by the institutions of knowledge and power and hermaphrodites were seen as criminals based on their anatomy alone, which “confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union” (Foucault 1978, 38).

Power prioritizes maintaining and managing of life and certain theories were rendered in order to subject bodies and also to control the population. This ushered in the era of biopower. Today, political power administered the alteration of an intersex person at birth. This alteration is basically to defend the interest of the general population in spite of it being said to be done for the wellbeing of the intersex person. This is mainly because many societies are still unwilling to accept intersexuality or other gender queer identities. Also, alteration is done to veil the inability of medical science and other institutions to deal with an ‘ambiguous’ sex as they fail to find a position for them in the society. This, in the terms of Butler, *undo* (Butler, 2004) the possibilities for the existence of other forms of being or in other words, it fails to acknowledge the existence of other forms of gender other than the binary.

Butler states that a person is defined by the acts which he/she performs successively which means that sexual identity and gender are effects of repeated actions on the body. Thus, identity is evidently influenced by institutions, practices and discourses. This suggests that the repetition of actions will lead to categorization of

people as either woman or man, as only these two categories are acceptable and recognised by society.

Butler is of the opinion that desire is being given importance in the formation of sexual identity for one to be recognised, thus giving it power. she asks: “If I desire in certain ways, will I be able to live?” (2004, 2) referring to the mutability of the terms used for recognition. The availability of these terms may confer humanity on certain people while depriving some other of the similar status leaving the latter into being an anonymity. As Butler says:

I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live. But I may also feel that the terms by which I am recognized make life unlivable. (2004, 4)

It should be understood that while there are some groups of people who wants to be recognised as either men or women, there are others who wants the kind of recognition beyond the existing two categories, simply demanding to be viewed as human beings with power over their own physical body without the need for medical interventions.

Butler, in *Undoing Gender* talks about the repercussions of living a life on the periphery or the liminal space in the gender binary patterns of the society. People living on this margin receives non-recognition as a human being because the normative acceptance of sex barred them from leading a life that is livable, which Butler terms *becoming undone*. In the society, human beings are dictated by the norms and thereby, defined by them. According to the sex assigned from the option of two, there are behaviours and social practices that has to be followed. These norms are basically the criterion which determines human beings and which constitute sex, in a way, defining destiny. For the intersexuals, the only option for them is to undo themselves and abandon what they truly are in order to acquire the accepted. Being intersex is not an option so they have to be either male or female. Butler says:

The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity. (2004, 219).

Intersex people are still waiting for a possibility to exist and to be recognised; living in a liminal space. This space they are placed in is recognised by the society as a space occupied by people who do not fit in the “normative” understanding.

There is a tendency to ‘fix’ and ‘correct’ what is regarded as a biological mistake by using surgery to alter the body of intersexuals in order to make that body more acceptable to the recognized gender norms. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the gender of these intersexuals is being concluded and decided by the medical community and the criterion used is the size of the genitalia of the intersexed child. In short, instead of allowing the intersexed persons to live life as they were born, they are altered and transformed to male or female according to the expediency of medical science and forbidden to live as intersexuals.

The intersexual characters in the selected texts transcend the gender norm prevalent in the conventional society by embracing the duality within themselves. Their journey and experiences in life may differ, however, they all have common experiences when it comes to the mental turmoil and the final acceptance of their own selfhood, except for Barbin (*Herculine Barbin*) who was born in a more conventional society than the others. Eugenides depicted the journey which Cal took westward when he fled from the Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinic where he chose a pen over a scalpel. Barbin used narrative to write himself into being, thus, creating an identity for himself. Max (*Golden Boy*) and Wayne (*Annabel*) confronted their fears and discovered a new found courage to accept their duality while, thereby, living beyond the binary of the accepted gender norm. In short, they dwell in the third space, the liminal space, a space which is beyond the conventional understanding.

In the selected texts, the intersex characters illustrate the importance of creating an identity for the intersexuals away from the strict gender dichotomy which has been regarded to be the measurement of normalcy. The role of society is to provide a space for the intersexuals to construct their own identity within the ambit of the society without any restrictive parameters. This kind of space can be found in the cultures of Papua New Guinea and the Dominican Republic where the presence of a third sex is acknowledged. The intersexuals have a space in these societies and are culturally accepted. *Annabel* presents a similar scenario when Winters talks about how once Jacinta wandered into an Innu camp and witnessed “a mother and small baby in one tent, and that baby had had something wrong with him” (Winters 43). The story goes:

He had been born with a genetic anomaly but his mother had held him and sung to him, a lullaby in Innuaimun, and no one had tried to take that baby to the Goose Bay General Hospital and maim him or administer some kind of death by surgery. (43)

Living in oppressive societies, the intersexed characters in the selected texts try to distance themselves from the conventional environment. They seek isolation in their quest for their identity at the expense of everything they hold dear. They demonstrate the possibility for the intersexuals to construct their own identities transcending the binary and by embracing the liminal space they occupy in the society.

Just as there cannot be a pure and unadulterated race, gender, despite some people’s dismissal, is not static. It is rather a construct which becomes restrictive. During the Middle Ages those who could not be put in either one of the two genders were labelled hermaphrodites and later referred to as intersexuals. They could choose a single gender without the option to embrace both. Michel Foucault in his introduction to *Herculine Barbin* writes:

Biological theories of sexuality, juridical conceptions of the individual, forms of the administrative control in modern nations, led little by little to rejecting the

idea of a mixture the two sexes in a single body, and consequently to limiting the free choice of indeterminate individuals.” (viii)

The failure to acknowledge the fact that the intersexuals can encompass and embody the two genders is proof that society endorses conformity to its gendered norms and also, that deviation from it is wrong. In a space like that, it is more or less impossible for groups like intersexuals to confidently embrace the self or reconcile the validity of his or her identity when medical science and society asserts their illegitimacy.

By forcing the intersexuals to choose either of the two biological sexes made available as options, they are thereby deprived of the other option which is to live a life free from having to choose their identity. In short, to borrow Bhabha’s term, their “hybridity” is not being acknowledged. This hybridity, according to Bhabha in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford (1990) “is the third space that enables other positions to emerge” (211) which the conventional society clearly fails to accept especially in the case of intersexuals. He relates the third space to the concept of translation saying that it “puts together the traces of certain other meanings and discourses” (211). Something new is being created by cultural hybridity removed from the older paradigms and structures while still containing traces of these previous structures. So, for Bhabha, the third space represents a space where there is a negotiation of differences. In this in-between land, the opposing groups are allowed to have contact, merge and collide in order to form something new and different but still containing traces from the other groups. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) while explaining the impact hybridity has on both the colonizers and the colonized- the old and the new, states:

The migrant culture of the ‘in-between’, the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture’s appropriation beyond the assimilationist’s dream, or the racist’s nightmare... and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of

splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference.
(321)

Jenni Ramone also writes:

The individual who migrates is translated into a new place and operates through a new language, becoming a translated individual bearing traces of both locations and languages. (115)

Winter also acknowledges this hybridity in Wayne and the liminal space he occupies in the society by comparing him to a night on the Battery. She says:

The night on the Battery was a necklace of floating light, a world of dreams, part city and part ocean, a hybrid, like Wayne himself, between the ordinary world and that place in the margins where the mysterious and undefined breathes and lives. (Winter 357)

Looking at the concept of gender binary through the lens of the third space, one can see how this binary can be a serious obstruction to social justice. In their respective times, the intersex characters of the selected texts had to battle this binary in their own. Even though it was equally hard for all the intersexed characters, the possibility of embracing the "hybrid" identity, free from the gender binary, seems to be less complicated for Wayne and Cal who simply relocated themselves to create a new identity. Bhabha further describes this space as providing:

the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood, singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation... it is the mergence of these interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference that the inter- subjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest or cultural value are negotiated.
(1994, 2)

In short, only with the loss of the old can new hybrid identities can emerge. And in the case of the intersexuals it is only when at puberty that their hybrid condition becomes real for them.

The life prior to puberty, on the other hand was more or less alike for all the selected intersexed characters for study in that they did not show signs of ‘abnormality’ or had any problems with the sex assigned to them and functioned much like the rest of their peers. Calliope says, “I was brought up as a girl and had no doubts about this” (Eugenides 226). Despite certain doubts she had, regarding her body, Calliope was certain about her gender for over a decade of her life; however, that certainty is juxtaposed with an incident which happens as an experimentation of her sexuality. This experimentation occurs with Clementine Stark, a classmate and reveals the separation between body and identity, thus, haunting Calliope for the rest of her life. With the experiment, Rene Descartes’ famous concept of Cartesian dualism becomes relevant with Calliope. Advocating this concept in the seventeenth century, Descartes proclaims that the “soul’s immortality is to form a concept of the soul that is as clear as possible, and entirely distinct from any concept of the body” (10).

For Descartes, the mind and the body are two separate entities; he said that:

[We] must conclude that all things we clearly and distinctly conceive as different substances, as mind and body are conceived, are indeed substances really distinct from each other. (10)

His notion that the body and soul exist and works independently highlights the struggles faced by the intersexuals. Barbin, Wayne, Calliope and Max all had to create their own identity no matter the condition of their bodies. However, their physical state is in no way related to their minds; Descartes said “the corruption of the body does not cause the mind to perish” (11).

The theory of separation of the body, mind and soul also brings forth the question of their sexuality. The studied intersexed characters particularly Calliope and

Barbin do not necessarily connect their supposed homosexual actions as an aberration or their early sexual encounters as something related to sex. In *Middlesex* Clementine propositioned Calliope and asks, “Do you want to practice kissing?”(264). In this instance, she explains the split between her body and her mind saying:

Somewhere below this, my heart reacting. Not a thump exactly. Not even a leap. But a kind of swish, like a frog kicking off from a muddy bank. My heart, that amphibian, moving that moment between two elements. (265)

However, even though Calliope acknowledges the amphibian like heartbeat, she says:

I was aware that there was something improper about the way I felt about

Clementine Stark, something I shouldn’t tell my mother, but I wouldn’t have been able to articulate it. I didn’t connect the feeling to sex. (265)

Similarly, Barbin describes the excitement she feels in her first homosexual relationship with her classmate, Lea with whom she spent a huge amount of time. Describing the presence of immense love between them as well as lust, she explains:

I could have wept for joy when I saw her lower toward me those long, perfectly formed eyelashes, with an expression as soft as a caress. (Barbin 10)

She continues to highlight the relationship she was enjoying, free from the disaster that came later. She recalls:

[T]he accents of that beloved voice echo deliciously in my ears and make my heart beat faster; they recall to me that happy time of my life when I did not suspect either the injustice or the baseness of this world” (13).

Wayne and Max on the other hand, had an unfortunate sexual experience as they were raped. However, what is interesting to note is that, these actions did not define their sexuality as it was not about being homosexual for both parties. After his visit to

the doctor for a surgery, Wayne was immediately confronted with questions from Derek Warford and his friends as they dragged him to Deadman's Pond and attacked and raped him with their masochistic opinion that Wayne wanted to be a girl in order to have sexual intercourse with guys. Derek exclaimed:

'I mean, why would anybody want to be a little girl when they didn't have to, unless they wanted to get fucked?' (381)

Throughout this incident at Deadman's Pond, Derek and his friend constantly referred to Wayne as "It", depriving him of any humanity even with how they handled him with words like "Fuck off, man. I'm not touching its hair." (379) and "undo its belt"(380). Prior to this experience, Wayne had experienced sexual encounter at school with a substitute teacher, Mr Henry. This experience was sort of an epiphanic moment as readers are introduced to the kind of unconscious desires Wayne had which manifested with the experience. While Mr. Henry was smothering him "flowers were bursting open between his legs, but the flowers were ugly flowers that he did not like" (107). He was introduced to this feeling as he was only eleven at the time. So he was confused and bewildered at the thought of someone wanting him in that manner. In short, his mind did not reciprocate the desires of his body. The author thus goes on to say:

So he escaped from Mr. Henry, but he could not escape from the fact that a man had wanted him, and that his body had responded to that man with a secret desire of its own. An exquisite stirring, unwanted, involuntary, mysterious. A child of eleven awakens to sexual ecstasy and keeps it to himself, and thinks for a brief time that he, or she, is the only one in the world to whom this has happened. For a little while Wayne's ecstasy remained hidden, like the bulb of any bloom, underground. (108-109)

Max in *Golden Boy* had a very unfortunate sexual experience. As mentioned before, his childhood best friend, Hunter raped him and forced himself through a little

hole which is basically an under-developed vagina. Max, even though possessed this under-developed vagina as well as an under-developed penis did not mark him or identify him as a homosexual which Hunter assumed him to be. Max pleaded, “I’m not gay, I’m sorry... it’s not a bad thing to be, it’s just... I’m not” (Tartelin 17). This assumption of Hunter was also based on the androgenous physical appearance of Max. Hunter said: “You’re supposed to like me... You’re more girl than boy” (17). Hunter destroyed his childhood friend based on assumptions when clearly, Max’s psyche and body are not of the same in the binary gender. Physically he may look feminine and may have somewhat of a vagina, however, he is attracted to girls and even had a girlfriend.

The situations highlighted in the narratives reveal the disconnection between sexuality and gender identity in these characters’ “ambiguous” nature in terms of their gender and sexuality. However, these texts expose a society where the third sex is not acknowledged and the protagonists flee from their respective society feeling alienated as they do not have a space in the two gendered system.

The split between gender and sexuality in intersexuals is noteworthy. The main thing that sets gender and sexuality apart is the fact that sexuality refers mainly to who one desires while gender, on the other hand mainly refers to what one desires to be. The protagonists of the texts desire to be is to live their reality outside the gender binary. Their sexuality does not necessarily reflect who they are which explains the fact that even though their body may be ‘ambiguous,’ their sexuality rarely seems ambiguous.

In *Herculine Barbin*, one can see how Barbin has a life-long attraction to girls. Being brought up as a girl, the abrupt transition from female to male should have made life easy for her in the heteronormative society if the traditional acceptance about gender is to be acknowledged. Barbin’s desire and her sex would align as far as the church and society was concerned. Having felt her difference ever since she was a young teenager, her memoirs recounts the attraction she had to a fellow female classmate, Theela:

From time to time my teacher would fix her look upon me at the moment when I would lean toward Theela to kiss her, sometimes on her brow and—*would you believe it of me?*—sometimes on her lips”. (27)

Later, she seems to have profound relationship with Sara, when she said: “What I felt for Sara was not friendship; it was real passion” (48). It is in this relationship that Barbin first identified herself as the opposite sex, prompted by her desire for a relationship with Sara. She admits, “I sometimes envy the lot of the man who will be your husband” (50). In *Undoing Gender*, Butler talks about the complicated relationship that is present between the body, desire, the self and the other, the combination of which makes up a person’s gendered identity. She explains:

The particular sociality that belongs to bodily life, to sexual life, and to becoming gendered (which is always, to a certain extent, becoming gendered *for others*) establishes a field of ethical enmeshment with others and a sense of disorientation for the first-person” (25).

In *Middlesex*, Calliope’s sexuality like Barbin’s is discussed at length which includes her several ‘homosexual’ relationships apart from her brief yet complex sexual experience with Clementine.

In all the selected texts one can see the emphasis placed on relationships specifically in the lives of the protagonists. This highlights the role desire plays in the subject formation. This desire does not simply signify the desire for the other but also the desire to be desired by the other. Butler exclaims, “despite one’s best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other” (2004, 19). Even when an individual constructs a gendered identity, there still has to be some kind of legitimization by the other especially between two romantically inclined individuals. The formation of desire and subject proves to be very crucial for Calliope and the chapter titled “The Obscure Object” serves as an important moment in the formation of the protagonist’s complicated identity. Jacques Lacan discuss about the matter saying:

It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge [*savior*] into being mediated by the other's desire, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence due to competition from other people. (7)

In Calliope's case, the person with whom she was deeply in love is the Object serving as the mirror through which Calliope obtains an important component for her identity construction. She says:

I watched her in class and I watched her outside it, too. As soon as I arrived at school I was on the lookout. I sat in one of the lobby's yellow wing chairs, pretending to do homework, and waited for her to pass. Her brief appearances always knocked me out" (Eugenides 324-325).

Calliope's passion together with what Butler explains as the formative power of the gaze upon the body, makes the Object the desired goal. The Object is the 'other' with which Calliope could understand herself. According to Butler:

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch and to violence" (2004, 21).

The object's femaleness seems to be what Calliope craves more so than an erotic desire for the object. However, it is unclear what Calliope is gravitating to: what she wants to be or what she finds attractive in others. Her desire for an unmistakable femininity is seen in her desire to embody the feminine traits.

Later as Cal, he encounters a similar situation when he meets Julie Kikuchi, a Japanese-American photographer with whom he has the potential for a lustful sexual relationship. By this time, he has accepted his body with its differences and androgynous appearance. He finds these similar qualities in Julie as well who initially assumes Cal is gay. She later confesses:

I'm always suspicious, being the last stop... Haven't you ever heard of that? Asian chicks are the last stop. If a guy's in the closet, he goes for an Asian because their bodies are more like boys. (Eugenides 184).

The above extract highlights the concept of appearance, performance, and sexuality. In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault talks about the presence of an intricate relationship that is present between desire and lack which is applicable to Calliope's case. He says that "the law is what constitutes both desire and the lack on which it is predicated" (81). Calliope is not only aware of the Object's otherness but she also seems to understand subconsciously what the object possesses. This possession of the Object which attracts Calliope to it is the exact thing which she lacks and needs. It aggravates what Calliope lacks and intensifies the role of lack in the construction of the subject and also sex. According to Foucault the two are knitted together saying:

sex to be governed by the interplay of whole and part, principle and lack, absence and presence, excess and deficiency, by the function of instinct, finality, and meaning, of reality and pleasure. (154)

The relationship between the Object and Calliope affected the identity formation of the intersexed girl and it is Calliope's desire for the Object that is the force behind the construction of the self. Having said this, it is however, more a need to recognise the self rather than the desire to have the other person. This resonates with what Lacan enunciates in relation to the subject having doubts regarding the validity of the object:

[the subject] ends up recognizing that this being has never been anything more than his own construction [*oeuvre*] in the imaginary and that his construction undercuts all certainty for him. (42)

Questioning what she recognises as desire for the Object will inevitably lead Calliope to question the cogency of her own identity. Her relationship with the Object first started off as an infatuation which later shifted to ambivalence and eventually passion. She recalls:

I felt a wave of pure happiness surge through my body. Every nerve, every corpuscle, lit up. I had the Obscure Object in my arms. (Eugenides 339)

It is during their relationship and also with the help of this relationship, that one perceives the emergence of Calliope to her true personhood. She recounts:

I sat astride her, on the saddle of her hips, and started with her shoulders. Her hair was in the way, so I moved it. We were quiet for a while, me rubbing, and then I asked, “Have you ever been to a gynecologist?” (347)

She, however, did not make it to the appointment for the better; as her knowledge about herself would change. It is during her lust for the Object that her intersexuality was first on the verge of exposition. Until the summer that she spends with the Object, Calliope was a virgin no matter the minor experiments she embarked upon with some of her childhood friends. Everything changes during the vacation she spends with the Object and her family. This remarkable change occurred with the shift in her sexual status and gendered identity. In retaliation, Calliope began to flirt with Jerome, the Object’s elder brother while the Object was already engaged with another guy which aroused Calliope’s jealousy. The four of them went to the woods and in a cabin, they used drugs, drank alcohol and engaged in sexual activity. Even though he was spending the time someone else, Calliope was more interested in what was happening between the Object and her boy. It was at that moment that Calliope begins to understand her situation. She questions:

Did I see through the male tricks because I was destined to scheme that way myself? Or do girls see through the tricks, too, and just pretend not to notice? (371)

In the story, this is the first instance where one can see the duality of Calliope’s physical body and psychology intermingling. For her, the intimate relationship she experienced with Jerome was not agreeable. She confesses, “Behind my impassive face my soul curled up into a ball, waiting until the unpleasantness was over” (373). The

ensuing account is the anguish Calliope felt with her ecstatic imagination where she leaves her body and floated to Rex Reece's body, the boy who the Object was with. She reveals, "I entered him like a god so that it was me, not Rex, who kissed her" (374). Apart from this account, in a tone of detachment she gives a detailed account of her time with Jerome: "I was simultaneously aware of both make-out sessions" (374). However this may look like for an outsider, for Calliope it is a very empowering situation. Mocking heterosexual encounter gives her comfort as her action does not hamper the societal norm. She expresses joy in analysing and lusting over the Object's body:

I saw them; I touched them; and since it wasn't me who did this but Rex Reece, I didn't have to feel guilty, didn't have to ask myself if I was having unnatural desires" (375)

Calliope knew that her intentions are not acceptable to the "heterosexual matrix", a concept that endorses the necessity to relate gender, sexuality and desire in order to be acceptable. She admits having "unnatural desires" and chose to perform her desires only in her imagination. However, her assumptions of the 'unnatural' feelings and desires is telling of the privileges given to gender over attraction. Her imagination of "unnatural desires" is short lived by a calamitous event happening to her at that moment. When Calliope begins to understand herself as Jerome enters her. She explains:

Pain like a knife, pain like fire. It ripped into me. [...] I gasped; I opened my eyes; I looked up and saw Jerome looking down at me. We gaped at each other and I knew he knew. (375)

In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler addresses this recognition in the face of another. She says, "One can reference an 'I' only in relation to a 'you': without the 'you' my own story becomes impossible" (32). While presuming Jerome's recognition of her, she begins to understand her situation. By projecting her reality onto Jerome, she

sees herself: “[F]or the first time [I] clearly understood that I wasn’t a girl but something in between” (Eugenides 375). This assumption is wrong whatsoever as Jerome does not have any idea about Calliope’s ‘ambiguity.’ Jerome, in a way becomes a catalyst for Calliope and the other for her self-understanding. One can see that Calliope consciously made herself the object by indulging in a relationship with Jerome in order to contemplate on her gendered identity. According to Lacan, “the subject makes himself an object by displaying himself before the mirror”(42). This is exactly what Calliope does: she shows herself through Jerome in order to attract the attention of the Object.

The view that a person is only considered a person if he/she is only entire male or female is constraining and also problematic as it fails to include the intersexuals from being human. Butler, in *Undoing Gender* inquires, “What might it mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life?” (1) and whether gender is “automatic or mechanical” (1) or not. Because of the fluid nature of gender, there is ample room for an overlap of the in-between. But when this liminal space fails to get acknowledgement, the natural order of gender and identity is restricted, allowing the prevalence of only the artificial sense of order created as a societal norm.

Since intersexuals are basically neither fully male nor female, the other group with whom they are closely aligned to are the transgendered people. This existence of duality can be magical for some intersexuals like Cal. He recalls his youth as Calliope when he had “the ability to communicate between the genders, to see not with the monovision of one sex but the stereoscope of both” (Eugenides 269). Calliope recognised and accepted the liminality of her body which according to Halberstam, one finds in the transgendered population.

Transgender may indeed be considered a term of relationality; it describes not simply an identity but a relation between people, within a community, or within intimate bonds. (49)

Eugenides, in order to make apparent that Calliope encompasses the two sexes, presents her physical appearance as somewhat androgynous which is also true for the protagonists of the other texts under scrutiny.

Calliope recalls the prevalent style and trend during the early 1970s as “a good time to be flat-chested. Androgyny was in” (Eugenides 304). This, according to Halberstam is a positive idea in the current culture as:

The gender ambiguous individual today represents a very different set of assumptions about gender than the gender-inverted subject of the early twentieth century; and as a model of gender inversion recedes into anachronism, the transgender body has emerged as futurity itself, a kind of heroic fulfilment of postmodern promises of gender flexibility” (18).

The above extract refers to the campaigns of large companies about mass marketing and the upsurge in the rejection of following the labels constructed within the society on issues of gender and sexuality. With reference to gender flexibility, Emily Martin says:

[s]ome have claimed that the body as a bounded entity is in fact ending under the impact of commodification, fragmentation, and the proliferation of images of body parts” (543).

There are companies like Gap who put everything on the line to sell their jeans, advocating in their commercials that bodies are similar regardless of their gender. It is acts of rebellion like this that caused violence and murder in many societies. However, in spite of this, companies gain enormous profit by endorsing bodies that are difficult to definitely determine whether the person is male or female. According to Halberstam:

Promoting flexibility at the level of identity and personal choices may sound like a postmodern or even a queer program for social change. But it has easily described the advertising strategies of huge corporations like the Gap, who sell

their products by casting their customers as simultaneously all the same and all different (18).

The protagonists of the selected texts are advocates of this notion of androgyny and ambiguity. However, as mentioned, the lived reality comes with a threat of violence and alienation which ultimately culminates in their sense of isolation in the heteronormative society.

It can be said that gender is not some medical fact but instead, to borrow the Butler's concept, "a social construct" (1993, 1). The body, desire and the need to conform are all important elements in the construction of identity of the intersexuals. To this, Butler then questions, "What counts as a person? What counts as a coherent gender?" (2004, 58). People like Barbin, Wayne, Calliope and Max, due to their 'ambiguity, do not portray any kind of coherent gender when judged from the traditional western concept of gender. In her article, Fausto-Sterling writes: "biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male" (1993, 20). However, the heteronormative society still cannot embrace this notion. This refusal to make better the limited scope of gender exacerbates the situation of the intersexuals.

Even though society believes that only two gendered identities are present and acceptable, the protagonists in the texts are true testaments that there are a whole other group of people who cannot fit into the norm unless some medical intervention is employed.

It is possible for both sexes to be present in a body and live harmoniously without medical science intervening to favour one over the other. *Annabel's* Wayne is an accurate example of this, as it was only when Wayne reached puberty that the revelation was made of him being born a "true hermaphrodite" (Winter, 236). The doctor informed him that "it means you have everything boys have, and girls too. An almost complete presence of each" (236). His true duality had initially been mentioned earlier when Jacinta, his mother took him to Goose Bay General Hospital

wherein Wayne was measured with a phalometer. The doctor said to Jacinta: “This baby can be raised as male” as his male genitalia “is the necessary length... it barely grazes one and a half centimetres” (52). Right from the start, Wayne defied classification. The doctor’s proclamation that he could be raised as a boy did not deny the fact that he too could be raised as a girl. However, as Wayne’s hometown, Labrador is a place where a sexually ambiguous person like Wayne could have a difficult time to claim his/her space; it was decided that he should be raised as a boy while all along his female side was still very much a part of him.

In his discussion on rejection of the intersexuals’ duality during the Middle Age, Foucault states “Everybody was to have his or her primary, profound, determined and determining sexual identity” (Barbin viii). As the intersexual body was not made to fit the classification of one sex, biology was overruled to keep the heteronormative gender set up undisrupted. In order to articulate the complicated relationship of gender and sexuality Butler turns to religion, saying:

In the international debate, the Vatican denounces the use of the term ‘gender’ because it either (1) is a code for homosexuality, or (2) offers a way for homosexuality to be understood as one gender among others”.(2004,183).

In this case, if a person whose physical body is feminized with female genitalia and identifies as a woman, but attracted to the same sex because of the presence of male hormones or chromosome, then she is said to be threatening the heterosexuality of the body. This basically says that the relationship between gender and sexuality is well-defined. However, Butler explains:

The correlations between gender identity and sexual orientation are murky at best: we cannot predict on the basis of what gender a person is what kind of gender identity the person will have. (6)

This is to say that there is no consistent and meaningful linkage between the desire to be and the desire for a particular gender. This is the kind of relationship one

sees in the sexual orientation of people like Barbin, Wayne, Max and Calliope. It is a priority for these characters that they be acknowledged as the “hybrid” they are and be accepted as normal even though the conventional heterosexual space may be disrupted. In other words, it is important to move beyond the binary and be an inclusive space in the name of humanity.

This chapter can be concluded with the descriptive words of Dr. Archie in *Golden Boy* which encompasses the various points dealt regarding gender and the norm.

We thought we understood gender — the idea of men and women as finite concepts with boundaries between each other, but lately I have come to understand that we are only just beginning to comprehend what ‘gender’ is, what it means to be allocated a certain gender, how much that informs the person a child becomes, and what happens when we don’t talk about gender as a malleable thing, when we shy away from discussing gender with children and teenagers and even adults. Dealing with trans individuals in the clinic did not prepare me for dealing with Max, because being one gender and wanting to be another is a completely different thing, perhaps even the opposite, of feeling, as perhaps Max does, OK as you are, but forced to choose. As a doctor, most of the health issues we work with involve a clear-cut right or wrong way to be. It is not OK to be obese, it is not OK to have cancer, it is not OK to eat sugar all the time. Many moral issues are the same: it is wrong to be racist, it is wrong to pay men more than women for the same job, it is wrong to murder. Perhaps this is why intersexuality is so controversial. The ‘norm’ is to have two separate genders, and when someone presents as different from the norm, we think they are ‘wrong’, we call their condition a ‘disorder’. But how detrimental is intersexuality, really, to a person’s life?... I sense I can only begin to imagine what it must be like for a parent of an intersex child, understanding that physically your child is happy and healthy, perfect even, but that, due to societal pressure to be normal and fear of differences, being intersex may just ruin their

life. It's not the fault of the condition, but one can understand how 'fixing' the condition might seem to make the problems go away. (251)

The characters in these texts cannot be fitted neatly into binary categories, but can be said to occupy the 'third space' constructed from the spatial trialectics established by Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974) and Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia'. This concept of 'third space' is radically inclusive and encompasses epistemology, ontology and historicity in continuous movement beyond dualism towards an 'other'.

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Chapter 4

Identity Politics

There are certain factors which significantly influence how people observe themselves. Among these factors the most important ones are race, gender, religion, ethnicity and nationality. These characteristics inform the identity which people construct for themselves i.e., the identity they imagine themselves to be jointly with the identity they physically show. It is however, debatable as to how much these factors are a part of identity or which of these factors have the greatest impact on identity. Many scholars argue that race and ethnicity are the two main factors in the formation of identity; but it is evident that gender is one of the key ways in which people are categorized. The practice of categorizing people based on anything is itself not very ideal in today's world and may have negative repercussion. A person is impulsively evaluated by others based on appearance, behavior and who they are attracted to. Even though these are superficial criteria to judge a person, they are sometimes important aspects in the self-construction of identity. For instance, in the construction of identity desire plays a crucial yet complicated role. Firstly, a person may desire another which is an easy way to fuse gender and sexuality because the self and the desire one have for others is seen to be distinct. Secondly, a person may seek others who have desire for him/her which is also related to desire for someone. Lastly, when a person has desire for someone, it is sometimes the other's possession which helps solidify the certainty of his/her situation. In other words, when a person is uncertain about his/her gendered identity, he/she can use the relationship he/she has with the other as a means to identify the self.

Society readily makes classification based on the aforementioned factors without taking into consideration how the subject would receive it. The failure to move beyond these initial classifications can cause various complications and complexities leaving minimal rooms for blurring of the line that exists in the heteronormative society. As

many individuals who are being assessed cannot be conveniently placed in a box, the information received regarding the understanding of their situation must be expanded.

Barbin, whilst obtaining her teaching certificate in a girl's school, recalls:

I would have preferred to be able to hide myself from the sight of my kind companions, not because I wanted to shun them—I liked them too much for that—but because I was instinctively ashamed of the enormous distance that separated me from them, physically speaking. (*Barbin*26)

Barbin's realisation that she did not fit in with her peers completely, suggests the threatening the conservative and conventional view of sexuality and identity.

In her pre-puberty stages, there was no question regarding Barbin's gendered identity from others and even herself as her intersexuality was not recognizable on her physical body. However, puberty brought about a tumultuous change in her life. One is compelled to feel a sense of empathy for the little girl whose life changed drastically physically and emotionally as the shift from female to male that happened in her puberty was very abrupt.

In *Middlesex*, Eugenides presents the complexities of the Stephanides's family with all their ups and downs. He depicts their pride in their Greek heritage and the complex family makeup stemming from Cal's grandparents, Lefty and Desdemona, who are actual siblings; his parents, Tessie and Milton, who are also second cousins even though they are unaware of it, the fact that his brother's name remain hidden throughout the book who she kept referring to as Chapter Eleven and also how he was conceived, his birth, childhood, puberty and also his second birth as Cal. These details are not presented in a chronological order but narrated in an attempt to make sense of his life and also to embrace his male identity.

The reconstruction of identity in *Annabel* is an eye opener to the fact that gender reassignment done at birth can be detrimental not only to the intersexuals but also to the

whole family as is clearly shown in the novel. The need to abide by the conventional gender binary brought about disintegration to the family as the father, Treadway felt the need to validate his action towards his intersex child, when he endorsed Dr. Ho's conclusion, "This baby can be raised as male" (Winter 52). Even with doubts he made it his mission to train him "in the ways of how to become a man" (Winter 68).

Max's identity in *Golden Boy* disrupts the cis gender system. In spite of him being sexually ambiguous with forty-six XX chromosomes and forty-six XY chromosomes, he still identified himself as a boy and is raised as one. His unanticipated pregnancy was the start of the degradation of a 'perfect' family and a 'golden boy'. What is normally seen as a blessing now becomes an agent which forces Max to expose to the world who he really is. They simply wanted to "just get rid of it [the baby] and everything will go back to normal" (Tarttelin 211). However, in spite of the family's negative attitude towards the baby, it in one way helped Max in his journey towards self-discovery and self-acceptance.

In the formation of her identity, Barbin not only had to deal with the treatment she received from others but also had to define her being and existence by her perception of the reaction from others about her. When the shift in her gendered identity was enforced by the court, society's response to the change led her into a spiral of depression and self-loathing. It is not only her physical body that has changed but the perception of others to that body. This had a negative impact for Barbin as it made her reject everyone in her life even her own self. In this regard, Butler says, "The 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation— or set of relations—to a set of norms" (2005, 8). Even though the need to depend on others to validate one's identity is difficult and not productive, many people are trapped into it which in turn destroys them mentally and psychologically.

Intersexuals are basically androgynous beings as they are literally part male and part female. The intersexed characters in the selected texts then represent this

overlapping which was honored in ancient Greece but is feared and hated in the current western milieu.

Another group embodying a degree of androgyny but often by choice is that of the transgender group. The main theme that Jack and Judith Halberstam addresses in *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005) is the brutal murder of a transgender, Brandon Teena, who was thought to be too masculine. Teena's tragic death underlines the prevalence of violence occurring not only towards the transgendered people, but also the intersexuals. Halberstam writes:

Even less time has been spent in consideration of these subjects who remain outside the ambit of the medical and the psychological productions of identity. (44)

The characters selected for study: Max, Barbin, Calliope and Annabel, despite various differences have shared experiences with these transgender people. However, transgender people are not all together similar with the intersexuals because of the liminal state of the intersexuals' body. The transgender people achieve this bodily state of liminality only after the medical intervention. After her escape to San Francisco, Cal (*Middlesex*) worked as an adult entertainer at a place called 'Sixty-Niners' where she utilise her 'abnormality' to earn some money. Eugenides also presents the readers with a transsexual character, Cal's co-worker named Carmen, "a pre-op, male-to-female transsexual" (Eugenides 486). Even though, both Cal and Carmen felt they were born in the wrong body, the difference between them is that Carmen had a choice while looking normal from the outside. Cal had to go through medical intervention in order to look 'normal'. While introducing Carmen, Cal said:

From an early age Carmen had felt that she had been born into the wrong body. In the dressing room one day, she told me in her South Bronx voice: "I was like, yo! Who put this dick on me? I never asked for no dick." It was still there, however, for the time being. (487)

Intersexuals are subjected to and are victims of the same hate crimes faced by people like Teena. In California, when Cal had no place to stay, he used to sleep in a park and one night was attacked by a group of men. They simple beat him up at first but when they mistaken him to be a girl, they attempted to rape him. However, when they pulled down his pants and saw his ambiguous genitalia, they were disgusted by what they saw and screamed, “Jesus Christ? [...] It’s a fucking freak. [...] I’m gonna puke, man. Look!” (476). Cal recalled the horrific incident that happened to him saying:

No sooner had the other one done so then he let go of me as though I were contaminated. He stood up, enraged. By silent agreement, they then began to kick me. (476)

Butler states that this kind of assault and violence emerges from a profound desire to keep the order of binary gender natural or necessary, to make of it a structure, either natural or cultural, or both, that no human can oppose, and still remain human. If a person opposes norms of binary gender not just by having a critical point of view about them, but by incorporating norms critically, and that stylized opposition is legible, then it seems that violence emerges precisely as the demand to undo that legibility, to question its possibility, to render it unreal and impossible in the face of its appearance to the contrary. (2004, 35)

Violence and discrimination from society is a common occurrence in the lives of the LGBTQIA+ community and can be said to be one of the ways in which sexual stigma is expressed. This stigma stems from the shared belief of the society in which people who are sexually ambiguous are discredited as invalid in relation to heterosexuality. Max was raped by his best friend Hunter who all the while said to him “You’re not a guy. You’re ... you’re not anything” (Tartelin 19) and constantly called him “freak” (18). His quest for identity resulted in Wayne’s assault and rape as it was a “real, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” (Winter 381) for them.

The desire to maintain the binary gender mentioned by Butler is being disrupted and in conflict with the very existence of the intersexuals. As mentioned earlier, androgyny was more accepted in the ancient past than it is now. The term intersexual itself is far preceded by its history and the treatment which these people with ambiguous genitals and ambivalent genders received in centuries before is far less grim than that in the contemporary world. The reason behind this could be the continual advancements in the field of technology and also because of the growing breach between the two poles of opinions on gender and sexuality.

A close examination of the intersexual characters in the selected texts, suggests that intersexuals must form their identities in isolation. This is due to the fear society inflicts upon them even to the point of leaving behind whatever ties they have. This self-initiated expatriation is especially interesting in *Middlesex* because Eugenides illustrates right from the beginning of the novel the strong familial ties that the Stephanides tries to preserve. In spite of this strong familial framework, Calliope chooses to flee which heightens the importance of self-identification in solitude.

She had been probed relentlessly regarding her sexuality and attraction. Her doctor, Dr. Luce who interviewed her made her undergo physical and psychological examination and tells her “We’re going to do an operation to finish your genitalia” (433). The word ‘finish’ here signifies how the doctor recognised the uniqueness of Calliope’s physical body. Dr Luce explains that Calliope is a boy when it comes to her physical body but:

...in utero, she followed the primarily female line of development. Especially in terms of the external genitalia [...] At puberty the other androgen—testosterone—started to exert a strong effect. (427)

According to the doctor, to “finish” the genitals of Calliope is to create a clitoris after removing the small underdeveloped penis. “Finish” talks about a thing which has not developed and in need of completing. “Change” or “remove” would be a more

appropriate word than “finish”, however, Dr Luce falls in line with all the other doctors who favour appearance and abidance rather than what lies beneath the surface. He explains:

The surgery will make Callie look exactly like the girl she feels herself to be. In fact, she will be that girl. Her outside will conform. She will look like a normal girl. Nobody will be able to tell a thing. (428)

Dr. Luce’s intention was to “help” Calliope by making her “normal” with the medical intrusion. After Dr. Luce dictates hi professional prognosis and plan of surgery, Calliope fled. This action of Calliope may seem extreme at first as she chooses to leave all her loved ones behind rather than get lost in the penectomy Dr. Luce advocated for her. However, it should be noted here that the intersexuals’ desire to construct an identity in isolation gives them the chance to edit out all the other influences that could complicate the construction of identity. In other words, in isolation the intersexuals can form a more accurate and pure identity without the influence of the other for whom desire for and desire of are mostly taken into consideration in the gendered identity formation.

Middlesex can thus be read as a book having the potential for societal improvement, however, one thing which should be noted is that Cal like Barbin (*Herculine Barbin*) and even Annabel (*Annabel*) had to bear the consequence of self-isolation for self-identification which is a life of loneliness. She could not deal with her future prospect if she stayed after hearing Dr. Luce’s report: “somatic appearance of a penis so small as to appear to be a clitoris” and a “‘penis’ [that] was slightly hypospadiac, with the urethra opening on the underside” (Eugenides 435). Dr.Luce further concludes:

To leave the genitals as they are today would expose her to all manner of humiliation. Though it is possible that the surgery may result in partial or total loss of erotosexual sensation. (437)

Failing to accept the diagnostics, she left, abandoning not only her family and loved ones but abandoning her previous gendered identity as well. After fleeing she made an immediate shift in her individuality. A seemingly trivial exchange of a luggage becomes significant and symbolic:

When they were gone, I got my suitcase from the closet. Then, looking at my turquoise flowers, I exchanged it for my father's suitcase, a gray Samsonite. (438)

She rejects her previous identity by rejecting everything in her life which represented femininity.

I left my skirts and my Fair Isle sweater in the dresser drawers. I packed only the darker garments, a blue crew neck, the alligator shirts, and my corduroys. The brassiere I abandoned, too. (438)

This change in the garment signifies the genesis of the shift in her identity. Next, she embarks upon changes in her appearance, behaviour and mannerism. Practicing to walk like a boy, Cal explains:

I tried to keep my pelvis steady now. To walk like a boy you let your shoulders sway, not your hips. And you kept your feet further apart. (441)

Cal is truly an embodiment of the Butlerian concept of gender performativity. The need to change his mannerism including the way he walks and talks serves as a way to convince not only other people but also himself about his gender.

With the abandonment of Calliope, there is also a shift in the narration. Previously there was no "I" and Cal was a stranger to Calliope herself and also the readers. Cal is first introduced in the novel when he went to Ed's Barbershop where he was addressed in the third person. This change in the narrative which sets the tone for Cal's arrival but brings about a confusion as to the identity of the individual who enters the shop:

Standing inside the door but looking as though he might flee back out of it was a teenage kid, tall, stringy, and an odd mix if ever Ed saw one. His hair was a hippie's and came down past his shoulders. But he was wearing a dark suit. The jacket was baggy and the trousers were too short, riding high above his chunky tan, square-toed shoes. Even from across the shop Ed detected a musty, thrift-store smell. Yet the kid's suitcase was big and gray, a businessman's. (421)

The author chose to introduce Cal in this manner maybe to emphasize the fact that Cal feels like a stranger in Calliope's body. He becomes secure only after he has made a shift in his dress and mannerisms and the "he's" changes to "I's". This also results in a feeling of solitude and loneliness as it involves moving away from the comfort zone and all the familiar things that he had been accustomed to. The most important separation Cal goes through, other than the separation from family and loved ones is the separation from Calliope. This entailed a great struggle for him and as it is a process which begins with shedding the feminine appearance and replacing it with masculinity. But even at the barber's shop, the presence of Calliope still looms large when he looks at himself in the mirror:

There she was, for the last time, in the silvered glass: Calliope. She still wasn't gone yet. She was like a captive spirit, peeking out. (442)

It is only when he decides to leave everyone behind at Michigan, that he becomes free to craft a brand new identity- an identity solely for himself and by himself, even though this transition is not from female to male, but from female to an intersex who lives as a man while acknowledging and embracing the third sex.

Also in *Annabel*, Wayne had to make a crucial decision to move out of Labrador in order to form his own identity. However, for Wayne's self-acceptance and becoming, there is another important thing which needed to occur; his father, Treadway's evolution. In other words, Wayne's father played an important role in his journey of self-identification. Neuhaus pointed out, "the possibility of [Wayne] achieving a

liveable life also depends heavily on the transformation of others” (134). The main cause for Wayne’s hatred of his own multiple self can be traced to his father’s authoritative and masculinizing efforts towards his child. This is evident with the sentence:

[n]ot the son your dad wanted. Not a son who kept up family traditions. Not a Labrador trapper, strong mettle and well read, solitary but knowing how to lead a pack. Instead you were ambiguous, feminine, undecided. (Winter 333)

The constant reinforcement of masculinity thrust onto Wayne coupled with the narrowness which Labrador symbolised can be deemed as the factors which forced Wayne to escape from that environment. In the chapter entitled “Willow Ptarmigan”, while talking about the ptarmigan bird couple Wayne noted:

The white on their bellies had already started to spread against their brown upper bodies. In winter they would be indistinguishable from the snow. (306)

Wayne knew that this camouflage would not last just as the passing of winter season would make the ptarmigan vulnerable -making their own home unsafe again. He could relate to “the ptarmigan cackling and shouting in short, angry barks, like a man shouting, ‘Get out!’ over and over again to the silent woods” (305), Wayne decided to “take the ptarmigan’s advice and get out of Labrador” (308) towards a new world where he would be able to create a new identity for himself free from the opinion of the others. Starting his journey by reducing the hormonal pills he was taking, his “body jumped at the chance to become less like a man and more like a woman” (355).

In Barbin’s case, the pressures that society inflicted upon him regarding what he should be and be doing was too much for him and “he felt the need for a temporary absence, and I deeply desired it” (179). As a result, he rushed at the first chance he got to escape to Paris. He narrates:

Five or six weeks after my visit to the prefect, I received the invitation to go to Paris, to present myself to the head of operations of the railroad of... This letter filled me with joy. To the prospect of a journey to Paris was added the hope of promptly leaving a region that I had come to abhor, and of finally escaping from the kind of ridiculous inquisition of which I saw myself the object... my poor mother was radiant, although the idea of a forthcoming, separation mingled sadness with the joy she felt because of this compensation, which already appeared to her as the dawn of a shining future. (181-182)

From the above extract, it becomes evident that the prospect of an escape from the society filled Barbin and her mother with hope of a better future; a future where she would be able to celebrate her 'self' and construct a new identity. Paris symbolised a space for her to start over. She said, "My arrival in Paris marks the beginning of a new phase of my double and bizzare existence" (190). However, she could not and also had no intention to make the shift of gender identity. Barbin was still able to revert to an isolated and alienated existence and as even though she was unable to craft a new identity, she still managed to maintain what she felt was her true gendered identity. When Barbin was ordered by the court to live as a male individual, she was able to reject the imposition by rejecting the society which made the classification. Barbin, Cal, Max and Wayne all had to escape the very people who imposed strict rules of gender binary on them. They made attempts to adjust to the limited options followed by their respective society. The ways in which the selected intersexed characters handled their situation differ immensely, however; it is interesting to note that they all have analogous experiences. Being sceptical of science, they are all limited by their physical bodies but on the other hand, depend on them in their quest of the truth, and moved themselves from their comfort zone to craft their 'true' identity. For instance, upon becoming aware of her condition, Calliope attempts to end the existence of Calliope by running away towards the west like Huck Finn in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). This west is indicative of a space where one is able to find the freedom to discover their true self; a land where there is leniency in the rules. Huck Finn confesses:

I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. (405)

The west which symbolise departure from traditional society with a free environment provides a more conducive space for characters like Calliope to construct an identity for themselves. Calliope left after learning about the etymology of “hermaphrodite” and stumbling on the word “monster.” She left a note saying, “I am not a girl. I am a boy” (Eugenides 439) and continued to live like one from thereon. It is therefore very apt that Eugenides labels two of the chapters in *Middlesex* as “Go West, Young Man” and “Gender Dysphoria in San Francisco” which narrates the concept of escaping and confinement. Moving to the west also signifies an exaggeration of the self, “as the intersection of ways of being—for to pass is not to inhabit one place but to move between, to carry with one's self the very other that one desires to be” (Caster and Andrew 138). The westward journey Calliope undertook, the path towards seclusion that Barbin and Wayne ventured into and the journey undertaken by Max to make a final reconciliation with his sexual ambiguity all illustrates their journey to form their ‘true identity. As mentioned earlier, *Herculine Barbin* portrays an intersex character who in order to craft her identity had to flee to be in solitude, but the motivating factor and the outcome she had is far from what Cal had. Barbin's initial experience of alienation was not voluntary as he was forced to live in isolation because of her intersexuality, but the isolation she went through next, the suicide she committed was a decision she made consciously.

Despite the differences in the experiences of the selected characters, the journey which they embarked upon to attain self- realisation are interestingly alike. Even Barbin's suicide can be viewed as a metaphorical exile and an attempt to coordinate the psyche and the physical body. Aligning the body and the psyche has been a constant struggle for the intersexuals, especially Barbin. Though categorised as a man, she never wanted to be one or felt like one. Her suicide is an act of rejection of the life she was forced to live by the court order- not the life she wanted for herself. Inwardly a female,

her body was classified as male as it was impossible for her to reconcile with her 'difference', Barbin eventually decides to take her life as she could not exist with the constant inner conflict any longer. Therefore, Barbin's suicide can be seen in multiple ways: it can be viewed as an act of rebellion, affirmation or an act out of desperation. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that Barbin was struggling as she was deprived of the power to decide her own identity. Barbin's refusal to live in confinement and under restrictive categorizing society is an act of affirmation. In *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, Emile Durkheim says:

We actually see the individual...seek to strip himself of his personal being in order to be engulfed in something which he regards as his true essence. (225)

In her book, Durkheim talks about the gendered identity which a lot of people feel they are. In the case of Barbin, the "true self" (the identity she felt she is) and "true sex"(the identity which other people felt she is), are not aligned and are not complementary to each other. Barbin depicts the length someone could go when they are forcefully categorized into a certain gendered identity which they themselves feel is inaccurate. Glenn Muschert in "Self-Affirmation through Death: A Contribution to the Sociology of Suicide through Literature" says that the main goal in suicides like that of Barbin's is to impart a message. He further says:

Some forms of suicide are meant to be self-affirming despite the apparent irony that self-killing might appear to lead to the annihilation of the self. Suicide can be a "means of taking control over one's self" (299)

It is evident that Barbin could not have control when she was made to lose her female gender but on the other hand, she had control in the obliteration of her own self. Her suicide then is her way of rejecting what society forced unto her, a reclassification as male. When this reclassification was enforced, to the world, Alexina (her female name) died giving life to Abel (her male name). However, to Barbin, Abel ceased to

exist as she failed to accept the gendered identity the society gave to her. When she died, she left behind what Foucault said:

...a document drawn from the strange history of our 'true sex.' It is not unique, but it is rare enough. It is the journal or rather the memoirs that were left by one of those individuals whom medicine and the law in the nineteenth century relentlessly questioned about their genuine sexual identity. (Barbinxi)

Intersexual and transgender people, may differ in the construction process of their identity but among their many common needs is their need to tell their stories. According to Halberstam, "transsexuals become real literally through authorship, by writing themselves into transition" (52). Intersexed individuals also go through a similar situation as they are in need of writing themselves into existence. One can see the success of this power of narration in the case of Barbin, Cal, Max and also in the narration about Wayne. Cal confesses:

It occurred to me today that I'm not as far along as I thought. Writing my story isn't the courageous act of liberation I had hoped it would be. [...] Still, you can only do what you're able. If this story is written only for myself, then so be it" (Eugenides 319)

Cal continues to address the readers saying, "I feel you out there, reader" (319) is in keeping with Butler's concept of directing the reader as an important part of identity creation. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler explains:

If I am trying to give an account of myself, it is always to someone, to one whom I presume to receive my words in some way, although I do not and cannot know always in what way. In fact, the one who is positioned as the receiver may not be receiving at all, may be engaged in something that cannot under any circumstances be called "receiving," doing nothing more for me than establishing a certain site, a position, a structural place where the relation to a possible reception is articulated. So whether or not there is another who actually

receives is beside the point, since the point will be that there is a site where the relation to a possible reception takes form. (67)

Evidently, like Cal, Barbin wrote her memoir to be read by future audiences and she directs this narration of existence to someone. Incapable of relying on her deceptive body, Barbin in the confirmation of her existence, had no choice but to rely on this act of self-narration. According to Halberstam, it is crucial that the intersexuals rewrite their own stories as the future could be a devastating world for them. Barbin, before committing suicide had written a very wide and informative account of her life then. However, the feeling of the need to commit suicide that was lurking in her horizon could be the reason why she sped up the process. Halberstam writes:

The constant diminishing future creates a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now, and while the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment. (2)

In this state of liminality where the lines of identity and gender become blurred, writing their story becomes essential since they are not capable of recreating their body.

Middlesex illustrates the importance of narrative. It is a conglomeration of personal narrative, identity construction, lives of sexual and gender ambiguous beings with medical proceedings and terms. The protagonist and narrator, Cal recollects his previous life as Calliope merging into his new and constructed life as Cal. In *Herculine Barbin*, Barbin's death is resultant of the conflict society induces upon her. Cal's construction of identity in *Middlesex* can be regarded as a sequel to *Herculine Barbin*. With its in-depth and nuanced portrayal of Cal in his construction of a new identity for himself, Eugenides through *Middlesex* shows that he is aware of every fact about intersexuals, including the involvement of medical science and also the lived experiences of the intersexuals. It is obvious that, after reading about the lives of the intersexual protagonists, Barbin's response to her reclassification is different from that of the others which could be mainly because of the historical time period they were in.

The diagnostician handed Barbin's new identity in an abrupt and cavalier manner and to make matters worse, it was not the gendered identity Barbin felt she belonged to. In her memoirs she narrates how the male identity she was given forcefully marked the end of everything:

So, it was all over. According to my civil status, I was henceforth to belong to that half of the human race which is called the stronger sex. I, who had been raised until the age of twenty-one in religious houses, among shy female companions, was going to leave that whole delightful past far behind me, like Achilles, and enter the lists, armed with my weakness alone and my deep inexperience of men and things. (175)

Her suicide was therefore, a result of being forced to live as someone or something she was not.

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler talks about David Reimer who was raised as a girl after his penis was accidentally burned and severed during a surgical operation "to rectify phimosis, a condition in which the foreskin thwarts urination" (59) he killed himself eventually as he could not embrace the gendered identity constructed for him. Disapproving an idea which became prevalent in the 1960's, Butler writes:

If a child underwent surgery and started socialization as a gender different from the one originally assigned at birth, the child could develop normally, adapt perfectly well to the new gender, and live a happy life. (2004, 59)

The doctors made a serious mistake about David's biological sex. However, though David was treated and made to live like a girl, he remained a male. Upon turning fourteen years old, David again started to live as a male but later his male genitals were reconstructed. Butler writes:

At this point, David started requesting, and receiving, male hormone shots, and also had his breast removed. A phallus, so it was called by Diamond, was

constructed for him between the age of fifteen and sixteen. David, it is reported, does not ejaculate, although he feels some sexual pleasure there; he urinates from its base. It is a phallus that only approximates some of its expected functions and, as we shall see, enters David only ambivalently into the norm. (6)

David and Barbin both failed to make peace with their changing body and the shift in their identity. Also, they both felt that the only route of escape possible for them was to leave behind their physical body. Barbin faced a lot of depression and was unable to transform into a man which shows her gendered identity, female. The depressing state which marks the start of her suicidal tendency is seen when she states in her memoirs:

My God! What remains to me then? Nothing. Cold solitude, dark isolation! Oh! To live alone, always alone, in the midst of the crowd that surrounds me, without a word of love ever coming to gladden my soul, without a friendly hand reaching out to me! What a terrible, nameless punishment! Who will ever be able to understand it? To carry in oneself ineffable treasures of love and to be condemned to hide them like a shameful thing, like a crime! To have a soul of fire and to say to oneself: Never shall a virgin grant you the sacred rights of a husband, that supreme consolation of men here below—I am not to enjoy it. Oh, death! Death will truly be the hour of deliverance for me! (180-181)

She even addressed God and narrated her pitiful condition as it seemed that He was the only source of hope for her:

Another wandering Jew, I await it as the end of the most frightful of all torments!!! But You remain to me, my God! You have willed that I belong to no one here below, through none of those earthly bonds that elevate man by perpetuating Your divine work! Though I am a sad disinherited creature, I can still lift up my eyes to You, for You at least will not reject me! (181)

Though Calliope and Wayne have many shared experiences with Barbin, what sets them apart is their gendered identity. They do not possess a strict female gendered identity like Barbin. But this does not mean that they had suspicion about their intersexuality from the start. Indeed, just like Barbin and even Max, they knew about their anatomical ‘complexities’ from puberty. However, they all felt the need to escape their physical body in order to find peace. Therefore, their main difference lies in the gender identity or the self-identification the characters feel they are. Cal and Wayne do not have a problem identifying themselves as male while Barbin and Max could not classify themselves either as male and female respectively. This shows the need to view gender as a fluid entity, something which is not fixed, something which the intersexuals can determine without taking their body into consideration. In spite of the many similarities the selected books share regarding the complexities in the anatomy and identity, all the works present an accurate yet depressing account of what it means to live in the liminal space of the society, the outskirts and the periphery of the conventional world. In the midst of this disintegration, Cal, Max and Wayne successfully created a space where they could feel complete and most importantly a space where they could live the reality, most suitable for them. Shahnaz Khan Said:

Hybridized individuals, caught in the dis-continuous time of translation and negotiation, erasing any claims for inherent cultural purity, inhabit the rim of an “in-between reality” marked by shifting psychic, cultural, and territorial boundaries. Trinh Minh-Ha speaks of this translation in “Grandma’s Story” when she says, ‘Each woman, like each people, has her own way of unrolling the ties that bind.’ (464)

Khan’s statement suggests that the third space approach gives the hybridized individuals a possibility of doing things in a new way. As mentioned, binary sex/gender limits individuals as to what they should be, how they should act and what they should look like. But, in this third space sex and gender categories are not exclusionary anymore, thus, blurring the fixed line.

However, for individuals like Barbin living in a time when society was still very ignorant, acceptance of one's "ambiguous" identity was difficult. She was unable to live as a male, an identity she felt and knew was not her reality. Though renamed Abel, she chose to not live at all as Alexina remained her true identity. She knew that her end was inevitable due to the immense pain she suffered in the hands of society. She said:

This incessant struggle of nature against reason exhausts me more and more each day, and drags me with great strides toward the tomb in no longer years that remain to me but months, days perhaps. I feel that in an obvious, terrible way, and how sweet, how consoling this thought is for my soul. Death is there, oblivion. There, without any doubt, the poor wretch, exiled from the world, shall at last find a homeland, brothers, friends. And there, too, shall the outlaw find a place. (198)

While examining all four texts, apart from the different experiences faced by the main characters in their own time, what stand out is the ability for a person to live freely in the gender he/she find most accurate affects the limit to which they can function. Even though society desires to classify and group things which are alike, it is not possible, howsoever, for the intersexuals to fit perfectly into one box of classification. As a result, they have no other option but to create a new box for themselves using various methods like personal narratives (in the case of Barbin and Cal) to help form and construct their own identities. This need for the construction of the self comes with the need to equip that self with a sense of history. Since Cal was born only after the symbolic death of Calliope, he has no history that is extensive to trace back to childhood and various other memories, so he constructs this history via narrative. Cal and Barbin write themselves to existence; to persons with a full life who deserves to be heard. John E. Toews enumerates how an act of narrating one's story could benefit that person especially if "the telling of stories contained within themselves an analytic perspective on the conditions of their own story-making" (37). The act of writing is to leave something in a state of permanence. Hence, writing becomes somewhat like a substitute

for procreation. After learning about Calliope's complex diagnosis, Tessie asks the doctor, "Will she be able to have children?" (Eugenides 428), upon which Dr. Luce replies, "I'm afraid not, Mrs. Stephanides. Callie will never menstruate" (428). Due to the sterility of the intersexuals, the act of writing becomes an extension of the self and a marker of permanence.

On the topic of the role the body plays in the construction of identity it is safe to say that Barbin, in no way could construct an identity independent of her body while it was an option for Max, Wayne and Cal. This is mainly because of the time period the selected books are written and also the developments in the medical science which makes alterations on the body possible. According to Barbin, the only way for her to attain a realization of the self is only by taking her own life. Barbin suffers from what Jacques Lacan says: "a personality that achieves self-realization only in suicide" (8).

On the topic of the 'performativity' of gender, Butler says that gender is performative:

...if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style. (520)

Taking this concept of Butler into consideration, one can consider the body of intersexuals as a pristine slate onto which gender is performed using the clothing choices which is often exaggerated in order to prove their point. This overperformance of gender can be seen in Calliope's childhood when she was made to wear "pink skirts,

lace ruffles, Yultide bows hair” (Eugenides 224) as also when Cal exaggerated his clothing choice to negotiate his gender and his self.

The cigars, the double breasted suits—they’re a little too much. I’m aware of that. But I need them. They make me feel better. After what I’ve been through, some overcompensation is to be expected. (41)

Relying on a constructed action according to Butler is a means of performing and creating one’s identity. In *Gender Trouble* she writes:

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. (192)

These clothes exaggerated by the characters wearing them become an integral component of gender performativity. In *Middlesex*, a metaphor of this clothing is seen in the relationship between Cal and Calliope. Even though Cal symbolically buried the existence of Calliope in him, she still has not diminished her presence in him. Cal says:

It’s a little like being possessed. Callie rises up inside me, wearing my skin like a loose robe. She sticks her little hands into the baggy sleeves of my arms. She inserts her chimp’s feet through the trousers of my legs. (41-42)

By blurring the boundary of the body and the clothing, the body in a way can be seen as a space on which to perform and construct the self.

In the relationship between the society and intersexuals, it is evident that the intersexuals are singled out increasingly. Regarded as “criminals, or crime’s offspring,

since their anatomical disposition, their very being, confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union” (Foucault 1978, 38); they have been labelled as sick, “Deviance has shifted from being cast as sin, to crime to sickness” (Preves 33). Foucault noted that in the Middle Ages, the church held a prominent role in the lives of the public and responsible in the medical shift. In his introduction of Barbin’s memoirs, he explains:

When confronted with a hermaphrodite, the doctor was no longer concerned with recognizing the presence of the two sexes, juxtaposed or intermingled, or with knowing which of the two prevailed over the other, but rather with deciphering the true sex that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearance. (viii)

Adhering strictly to this notion of “true sex” is failing to give space for a third sex which in turn hampers a possible progress in the intersexual movement.

The many executions that have been exercised on the intersexuals prove the point of Preves referring deviance as a crime. This crime however was caused by the constant shifting between the society’s constructed gender rather than intersexuality itself. According to Halberstam:

Within the life cycle of the Western human subject, long periods of stability are considered to be desirable, and people who live in rapid bursts [...] are characterized as immature and even dangerous. (4)

This “burst” which Halberstam talks about may seem to be an exaggeration as the shifts between genders is not a constant nor a continual movement. Mostly, they make a single shift (in some cases after careful decision process) and adhere to the one gender they shift upon. Initially, this single shift may not necessarily be referred to as a “burst.” However, for the “normal” conventional society, this shift is very much so abrupt. In Preves’ words the real crime results in “appearing, outwardly, to be of the ‘other’ sex, it was feared hermaphrodites would tempt heterosexual partners into

“homosexual relations” (35). What seems to be the fear of the conventional world is the intersexual disruption of what Butler calls the “heterosexual matrix” (239).

With the advancements in medical science, the “deviance” is labelled as a sickness which debatably requires the intervention of medical science. Preves remarks, “most children with ambiguous sexual anatomy do not require medical intervention for their physiological health” (11). Moreover, the surgeries mandated are, “elaborate, expensive, and risky procedures [and] are performed to maintain social order for the institutions and adults that surround the child” (11-12). Furthermore, it becomes problematic for the intersexuals as medical science decides on their “true gender” using complex surgeries. Butler exclaims:

The vast majority of intersexed infants are subjected to surgery that seeks to assign them to a female sex, since as Cheryl Chase points out, it is simply considered easier to produce a provisional vaginal tract than it is to construct a phallus. (2004, 63)

Comparing the time of Barbin with contemporary society, the problems the intersexuals face with the medical intervention have not yet gone through drastic changes. Living a life which one feels is his/her truth or living a life which embodies both the accepted genders is not acceptable anymore. Barbin wrote this instance in her memoirs as she was deprived of her femaleness which she had fostered. She was given the label of a boy and renamed as Abel abruptly with no fore warning or explanation. This abruptness was obviously very traumatic for her and this paired with the stigma that comes with her condition proved to be pernicious for Barbin. The violence encountered from others coupled with the uncertainty they have of themselves and the need to reconstruct their identity anew are the main factors which pushed the intersexuals to the liminal realm of the society.

The bodies of the intersexual like Cal, Max, Wayne and Barbin disrupt the border and the accepted binaries which force them to move away to the periphery, the

liminal in order to escape the ogling eyes of the conventional society. They desire to construct an identity they feel they are by abandoning their old selves, an identity and a gender which is forced upon them. By rejecting the forced construction of the self by others, they create a “self” which is more acceptable to them.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

The modern world is consciously forcing the representation of the intersexual characters toward the liminal space, thus, limiting their appearance. This can be the reason why majority of the public is ignorant of their condition and even their existence. This has also caused a huge problem in the process of the intersexuals' self-identification especially with regard to gender construction. With the scarcity of materials, researchers and activists have to focus on works which portray the experiences of transgender individuals. The deprivation exercised on Barbin, Max being raped by his friend who called him "freak", the rape and assault Wayne experienced at Deadman's Pond by Derek and his friends and Cal's experience of violence and humiliation in the hands of multiple guys at San Francisco park are all similar to the hate crimes transgender people experience around the world.

The pre-operative state and the transgender people in their transitional state both embodies the two genders. While being in this state, they blur the line of binary and occupy the liminal space i.e., the third space and hence, this space should be acknowledged. In the body of the intersexual, there is always this contradiction and conflict between the attributed gender identity and the chromosomes and genital which leads to a disagreement between the identity marker of the biological sex and the actual self. Therefore, there cannot be one true gender for the intersexual nor one true self in this heterosexual world. For this reason, the third space should be acknowledged and the intersexuals should be made to live peacefully. However, today, in most societies intersexuals are forced to live as either of the two sexes, something which they are not. In An interview Bhabha said:

...hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new

structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (211)

The transgender people are however, different from the intersexuals because of the fact that the transgenders seek to achieve that one sex by means of surgery. Moreover, whilst the transgender people can achieve a certain level of harmony between the psyche and the body using medical intervention, the intersexuals can never do so. The kind of procedures made available to the intersexuals like that proposed to Calliope, Wayne and Max are mainly procedures to align their outward appearance with the societal norms. These “corrective” surgeries performed on the human body are just means to rename and re-classify. Even though Barbin existed in a time before medical science was able to make genital alterations, his experiences cannot be discredited. She was forcefully renamed and reclassified by the society. However, no matter the differences both transgender individuals and intersexuals illustrate the importance of breaking down the dividing walls that separates them from the rest in the society.

Intersexuals are present in the society whether one denies it or not and they have been there from ancient times. The perception of the society regarding the intersexual is a major cause of psychological problems. This can have fatal repercussions as well as induce a living hell for them which is apparent from their situations. The ignorance of the society can obviously be lifted by a simple act of acknowledgement and acceptance of the third space they are occupying Cal points out, “I was beginning to understand something about normality. Normality wasn’t normal. It couldn’t be. If normality were normal, everybody could leave it alone” (Eugenides 446). Closely resonating with Eugenides’ *Middlesex* is Michael Warner’s belief in the non- static aspect of identity. He says:

Imagine having no disregarded personalities, no vestigial selves, no visible ruptures with yourself, no gulf of self-forgetfulness, nothing that requires explanation, no alien version of yourself that requires accommodation. What kind of life is that? (Warner 39)

Warner's opinion about setting aside the "other" self/selves can be seen in Cal's words: "Struggle for unification" (Eugenides 106). He made a suggestion regarding the alternative way to see identity:

But I distrust both of these views of myself as other. What if I were to stop saying 'it was another life'? what if that life and this one are no so clearly opposed. (Warner 39)

In *Middlesex*, Cal depicts how identity can be fluid, changeable with experiences and how one is able to be "other" within the self, as, "We're all made up of many parts, other halves. Not just me" (Eugenides 440). His statement provides a space not only for the "other" but also for the "impossible" (Eugenides 516).

This "impossible" life refers to his transition from Calliope to Cal and his acceptance of both Callie and Cal in him. The two exists not as antagonistic rivals but co-existing in him bringing about his completion and unification. He writes:

You will want to know: How did we [their family] get used to things? What happened to our memories? Did Calliope have to die in order to make room for Cal? To all these questions I offer the same truism: it's amazing what you can get used to. (520)

Cal did not let Calliope die with his birth but lets her remain a part of him. Her presence in him helps to define and shape his identity. According Cal, it is possible to be both masculine and feminine simultaneously as he says:

Even now, though I live as a man, I remain in essential ways Tessie's daughter. I'm still the one who remembers to call her every Sunday. I'm the one she recounts her growing list of ailments to. Like any good daughter, I'll be the one to nurse her in her old age" (520).

However, from the latter part of the book, it is evident that Cal identifies himself as a masculine intersexual. While talking about certain Greek tradition and custom, he

states, “it was always a man who did this, and now I am qualified” (529). To him, identity is ever changing with conditions and experiences and the normal is “what you can get used to” (520). The nature of the narrative in Eugenides’ novel can be best described by Peter Brooke’s argument in “Reading for the plot,” wherein:

It is the ordering of the inexplicable and impossible situation as narrative that somehow mediates and forcefully connects its discrete elements, so that we accept the necessity of what cannot logically be discoursed of”. (10)

Through the narrative, Cal successfully creates not only a story that is coherent but also a coherent identity for his own.

For Max intersexuality comes with loneliness and that is the thing he dreaded the most. Longing to be loved and be in love like “normal” people, he felt that his intersexuality prevented him and others from embarking on that journey. He said:

I wish I could just tell everyone. I wish being me was normal, or if not normal, then accepted. I wish I didn’t have to hide all these thoughts. I wish I didn’t have to be alone with this, to worry that I’ll always be alone. Maybe that’s the worst thing about being intersex. That I can’t tell anyone. I don’t want to be alone anymore. (Tartelin 204)

He realises that his yearning for a world where intersexuals are accepted is just a dreamland as “this is the time when whether you are a boy or a girl counts. And you have to pick one. Why? Because those are the rules. Everything else is a non-entity” (204). With what has been going on in his life, the chaos and the confusion he experienced as an intersexual, Max felt defeated as he wished to be “just a girl, or even just a boy, with a girlfriend” (210). However, Max like Cal finally accepted his identity as an intersexual, thereby acquiring almost a nihilistic worldview:

It doesn’t matter if I think like a boy or a girl. It doesn’t matter anymore if I’m either or both or neither. All that shit seems so petty and immaterial now.

There's so little difference between one human being and the next, it's just hypotheses, human ideas about life and the world and words, that mean nothing; about definitions that mean nothing to the earth, to nature, to the universe. Boys and girls and intersex people and me – we're just ideas, and when we're dead, the ideas will go with us. It all means nothing. (242)

The boy, regarded that he was cursed with his intersexuality hankered strongly to be “normal” and accepted, finally rejects the idea of having surgical operation to make him seem normal realising that he is “whole, whatever that means and does not mean; I am complete without the need for additions or alteration” (267).

In *Annabel*, the doctors definition of Wayne as having “An almost complete presence of each” (Winter 236) proved that it was possible for Wayne to live a healthy life without any medical intervention. However, Treadway's decision to raise his child as a boy proves problematic. *Annabel*, is a story of Treadway who was constantly battling with the duality of intersexuality and his coming into terms with his son's identity. Thomasina's appreciation and promotion of Wayne's duality further heightened Treadway's dismay about it. After returning from Europe and working as Wayne's teacher in Croydon Harbour, Thomasina could see in Wayne the possibility of a life not barred by labels and norms:

A thoughtfulness lay in his eyes that the other children, save for Wally Michelin, did not have. It was the spirit a poet might have, or a scientist, or anyone who sees the world not as he or she had been told to see it, with things named and labelled. Wayne Annabel, as she called him in her mind now, saw everything as if it had newly appeared. (171)

It is Thomasina who nurtured Wayne's duality by teaching him about the two-gendered Hermaphroditus, child of Hermes and Aphrodite, giving him hints about the multiplicity in everything, and also revealing to Wayne, not overtly, the fact that he did not have blood disorder but “a different order. A different order [that] means a whole

new way of being. It could be fantastic. It could be overwhelmingly beautiful, if people weren't scared" (208-209).

Treadway's fear of his son's harsh future as an intersexual forced him to tamper with his son's identity. However, after seeing the psychological and physical effects of his action on his son, he realises that he has to remove his son from the society of "rulers and measurements and lines", from all the "sexual politics, institutions, and practices" that according to Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson "have had an effect on the organization and regulation of nature as a socially produced set of places" (12). As a result, Treadway, who "never called Wayne anything but his son" (Winter 440), towards the latter part of the novel no longer cared whether Wayne was his son or daughter but only cared that Wayne lived up to his potential. He handed Wayne a bank book for an account and told him to use the money in the continuation of his self creation:

I want you to use it to do something with yourself. I don't care what it is but I want you to think about it. Go and visit different places if you want, places where they can teach you something you want to know how to do. It has to be something you have an interest in. (453)

The meeting with his old school principal, Victoria Huskins made Wayne realise the importance of living his truth. Having acted like a man for so long, the only certainty that he was aware of was the fact that he "did not want to continue pretending to be a man" (403). So, he headed to the Avalon Mall, purchased and wore women's clothes and makeup on his face. Miss Huskins who "thought children could not hear her unless her voice pierced their layers of dull comprehension" (200), now appeared refreshed and revitalized and seemed not to judge the current appearance of Wayne. On Miss Huskins' face, Wayne discerned "a freedom he did not have. Somehow this inflexible woman had become flexible, and she was beautiful in a way that he could not attain, though she was old" (415). At that very moment, he realizes that the privilege he was attempting to give to his female side was a misstep:

The lip gloss felt gooey on his mouth. He took a napkin and wiped it off, and he thought about the other makeup that the artist applied to his face and his eyes. He could feel it on his skin". (419)

Miss Huskins was not focusing on his outer appearance but the potential which he had and how he was wasting it all: "What's important now is why you aren't at the university, or at college, or doing anything at all with your mind and your talents" (419). This meeting changed Wayne for the better and enabled him to discover a safe space for people like him; people who are not considered normal. This is the third space for him, a liminal space, an in-between space although marked with disintegration but a space where he no longer felt he should be something he was not:

The other thing Wayne noticed was that among the students he did not feel out of place because of his body's ambiguity, as he had felt on the streets of downtown St. John's. many of these students looked to Wayne as if they could be the same as him: either male or female. There was not the same striation of sexuality that there was in the ordinary world outside a campus... he felt he was in some kind of free world to which he wanted to belong, and he wondered if all campuses were like this. (455-456)

Barbin was unfortunate enough to be a victim of such an intolerant society. The social norms were rigid and there was lack of knowledge regarding intersexuality, which ultimately led to his suicide. For the most part of her lifetime, she was unaware of her intersexual body nor made peace with it. However, with puberty, she became aware of her body changing and not changing as compared to her peers:

My condition, although it did not present any anxieties, was no longer natural. As the days passed, the doctor who has been consulted recognized that the most promising remedies were ineffective. He had finally decided not to worry about the matter anymore but to leave everything to time. As for myself, I was not all frightened. (*Barbin*54)

The changes of puberty set her apart from the others: “My features had a certain hardness that one could not help noticing” (67). In her memoirs she informs the readers about the various changes her body was going through like the visible hair on her cheeks and lips which she trimmed to avoid “joking remarks” (67). However, these changes were not much of a problem for her unless society made it a problem. She was forced to shift from female to male.

For Barbin, death was in a way, the only path for a unification and peace where she could live her true identity. she felt that death was easier than living a life of hatred filled with isolation and alienation.

I consider that everyday given to me is the last day of my life. And I do so quiet naturally, without the slightest dread. To understand such indifference in someone who is twenty-nine, it would be necessary to have seen oneself condemned, like me, to the most bitter of all torments; perpetual isolation. The idea of death, which is generally so repulsive, is ineffably sweet to my aching soul. (208)

At one point she even pitied the society with their narrow spaces compared to her space which was full of possibilities, the third space. She said:

You are to be pitied more than I, perhaps. I soar above all your innumerable miseries, partaking of the nature of the angels; for, as you have said, my place is not in your narrow sphere. You have the earth, I have boundless space. Enchained here below by the thousand bonds of your gross, material senses, your spirits cannot plunge into that limpid Ocean of infinite, where, lost for a day upon your arid shoes, my soul drinks deep. (192)

As long as she was alive, society was going to chase her down. Even after she decided to live as Abel, society did not stop. She was not allowed to be a girl, but also even rejected as a man as she was physically weak and fragile to be a man. His physical liminality coupled with her past prevented her from acquiring jobs. She wrote:

“Here,” the lady said good-naturedly, “you could learn your duties in a short time; but you look weak, delicate to me, and not at all cut out for work of that sort. So I cannot take you on here.”

I was sent away.

Unfortunately, she was telling the truth. (205-206)

All the incidents that she had to undergo under the constraints inflicted by society made it impossible for Barbin to live life as an intersexual.

Therefore, the characters under surveillance sought a space— geographical or psychological, and be removed from the conventional society which constantly attempted to force binarism upon them. It is here that they are able to construct their own identity and decide what is best for them and works for them. Creating a safe haven away from the intolerant eyes of the society, they inhabit:

... a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expected to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other. (Soja 5)

These characters not only shed light on how to observe the process of self-identification, that but also how to view the body, the desire one have for the other as well as by the other. They also highlight the necessity of a self-induced isolation for self-identification which causes a lot of problems for the intersexuals at large. Being in constant conflict with the society continuously trying to banish, castrate and even correct them, these characters underscore the need for a diversion from the strict binary system which inflicts restrictions and sometimes even maim the body of the intersexual. The texts, *Herculine Barbin*, *Middlesex*, *Golden Boy* and *Annabel* rejects the limited

categories of gender and emphasize on expanding these categories. They advocate the importance of inclusion of bodies like that of Calliope, Max, Alexina and Wayne rather than eradicating, marginalizing or even mutilating them in order for them to fit into the current narrow conventional categorizations. They should feel at home in their liminal space, the third space which the society has to acknowledge.

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Other Relevant Information

1. List of papers presented in Conferences/ Seminars:

Sl. No	Year	Title of Paper	Title of Seminar/Conference	Organizers and Place
1.	2017	“Degendering the Cisgender Gospel in Laura Lee’s <i>Angel</i> ”	International Conference on “Religion, Literature and Culture”	Higher Education and Research society, Navi Mumbai, India.
2.	2018	“The Objectified and the Abnormal in <i>Carol</i> by Patricia Highsmith”	A Two Day International Seminar on “Women in Texts”	Department of Bengali, English, Sanskrit and Philosophy, Jhargram Raj College.

2. List of Publications:

Sl. No	Year	Title of Chapter/ Research Paper	Name of book/journal	Publication details (Place/Publishers) with ISBN/ISSN
1.	2017	“Degendering the Cisgender Gospel in Laura Lee’s <i>Angel</i> ”	Journal of Higher Education and research Society: A Refereed International	Place: Navi, Mumbai. ISSN-2349 0209, Vol-5/Issue-2, Oct. 2017 (UGC Approved Sr. No.256/Journal No. 48102.

2.	2018	“The Objectified and the Abnormal in <i>Carol</i> by Patricia Highsmith”	Ajker Jodhan	Place: West Bengal ISSN: 9871- 5819 (UGC Approved Journal)
3.	2018	“Deconstructing the Heteronormative Belief in Aaron’s <i>Prayers for Bobby.</i> ”	MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies.	Place: MZU ISSN: 2348- 1188, Vol. V Issue II (UGC Approved Journal No. 64788)

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DEPARTMENT : English

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Sexual Ambiguity in Select Queer
Narratives

DATE OF ADMISSION : 27.07.2016

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2. BOARD OF STUDIES : 26.04.2017
3. SCHOOL BOARD : 26.05.2017

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ABSTRACT

THE LIMINAL SPACE: A STUDY OF SEXUAL AMBIGUITY IN
SELECT QUEER NARRATIVES

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

NOVEMBER 2021

Society is in a constant flux and ideologies and principles change from time to time. Some things which were deemed taboo before are now seen as an inevitable part of the society. In other words, in the post-modern world, there cannot be anything fixed and so the general acceptance of binaries become deconstructed making “freeplay” possible in almost every aspect of the society. This, on the other hand brings about liminality in the society which is mostly accompanied by chaos, confusion and disorientation.

Gender theory, can be said to be a form of resistance against the established notion of gender. It tries to deconstruct the generally accepted notions in the society paving the way for creation of possibilities and variety of alternatives in the world of gender. The binary gender is deconstructed to many variations normally boxed under “queer”.

This research explores the experiences of the intersexuals in the society in select works. The sexuality of the intersexual is considered ambiguous; and in most cases in order for them to be acceptable in the society; they have to go through sexual reassignment surgery at birth. As the name suggests, intersexuals are located in the in-between of the socially accepted gender binary, in the liminal space of the society.

It is by using this concept of “liminality” that the present study examine the intersexual characters in *Annabel* (2010) by Kathleen Winter, *Middlesex* (2002) by Jeffrey Eugenides, a memoir *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-century French Hermaphrodite* (1980) and *Golden Boy* (2013) by Abigail Tarttlin.

The selected works contain characters born intersex but caught in a society where they were made to suppress or they themselves suppressed their true identity due to the pressures of the society. For most of these characters, their self-narration becomes the main source of their existence and visibility.

The thesis situates the intersexual in a space beyond the heteronormative understanding of the gender binary. In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” (1967) Jacques Derrida talks about how the “center” is not the “center” anymore and he accuses

structuralist discourses of holding on to a "center": a privileged term that anchors the structure and does not play.

Human societies are mostly organised around the perceived physical differences between males and females. In other words they are based on the biological differences. This is arguably part of the human proclivity to think in terms of dualities - good and evil, right and wrong, superior-inferior, ruler-ruled, owner-owned. Maithreyi Krishnaraj writes:

Gender refers to the differences between males and females in human society over a whole range of variables- behaviour, personality traits, identity, psychic configurations, roles, functions, rights rewards and so on. In addition, it also denotes norms applicable to every aspect of life – sartorial to gastronomical, sexual, linguistic and sanctioned conduct in everyday life. All these norms result in creating as a cultural ideal, a particular type of individual, recognised as a woman or a man. The primary identity of a person in a human society is that of gender, which according to Psychologists, gets fixed in early infancy. (9)

In her introduction to her book *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (1996) Annamarie Jagose writes, “Queer theory’s debunking of stable sexes, genders and sexualities develops out of a specifically lesbian and gay reworking of the post-structuralist figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions” (3).

Judith Butler refuses to accept labels all together. In her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1990) she talks about gender performativity which is a phenomenon that is pervasive and somewhat obvious within contemporary society. Gender and sex, from Butler’s perspective, can be approached in the sense of being a construction rather than an essential part of one’s being. Gender is not ontological, but rather, it comes to existence through actions:

Gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is *always a doing*, though not a doing by subject who might be said to pre-exist the dead. (34)

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault talks about the concept of “Panopticon,” which has been heavily incorporated in the study. In Foucault’s view, power and

knowledge comes from observing others. It marked the transition to a disciplinary power, with every movement supervised and all events recorded. Suitable behaviour is achieved not through total surveillance, but by panoptic discipline and the introduction of a population to conform by the internalization of this reality. The more one observes, the more powerful one becomes.

The thesis takes the intersexed characters from the selected texts and examines how constructed and conventional gender binary system affected their lives. It also studies how this binary system pressurizes society to mandate the invasive and unwarranted sex reassignment surgery which in most cases brings dangerous repercussions.

Annabel (2010) by Kathleen Winter, an award-winning Canadian author, talks about a child who was born a “true hermaphrodite” (Winter 236) in early March 1968 in a small village of Croydon Harbour, located on the southeast coast of Labrador. It narrates the story of a child growing up with a confused gender identity and the struggles he had to undergo in a conventional society. The most mind-boggling experience but at the same time epiphanic moment for him came when the doctor who defined his condition informed him: “it means you have everything boys have, and girls too. An almost complete presence of each” (Winter 236). The novel challenges the discourses of science, religion and law that have helped in the relative silence about intersexuality in Canadian and other English-language literatures.

The story narrates the life of the protagonist’s early childhood to adolescence with all the changes that occurred physically and mentally during the most important stage of his life. Wayne was born in the year 1968 as an intersex child. However, due to his son’s intersexuality, Treadway, (his father) compelled with the feeling “to make a decision one way or the other,” decides that Wayne is “going to be a boy” and asks his wife, Jacinta to take Wayne to Goose Bay General Hospital (Winter 29-30). The doctor at the hospital measures the length of Wayne’s penis with a phalometer, the result of which becomes the confirmation of Treadway’s decision: the penis is long enough, so the “true sex” of Wayne must indeed be male (Winter 50-52). Wayne’s natural anatomy does not fit into the binary norm of gender; however, medical science makes it fit by applying what Alice Dreger has called a “monster approach” (1998, 33). Although there was no proof that Wayne would die without the medical procedures done to him when he was born, still he was lied to and made to live without knowing his true identity. He is

made to grow up as a boy when in reality he is both male and female. It is only when he attains the stage of young adult that he “become[s] who he had been when he was born” (Winter 370).

The second selected text is *Middlesex* (2002) by an American born novelist, essayist and also a short story writer Jeffrey Kent Eugenides. In the year 2003, he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and came to be known as a postmodern icon among contemporary writers. It became a bestseller in no time and sold more than four million copies. It was also featured in Oprah’s Book Club in 2007.

Although the book is not an autobiography, it is loosely based on certain facets of the life of Eugenides and his views on the Greek heritage. Eugenides was inspired to write this novel by his reading of *Herculine Barbin*, a 1980 memoir which left him dissatisfied with how the book discussed the issue of intersexed physical body and human emotions.

The novel deals with “a kaleidoscopic revision of twentieth-century U.S. history that compels him to reinterpret the American Dream. Following a double critical line of contemporary border and queer views, as well as updated discoveries in evolutionary biology—explicitly presented in the book—the author draws a sustained parallelism between race, identity, and gender and sex identity” (Collado-Rodriguez, 73) and also incorporates allusions related to Greek mythology.

Middlesex can be regarded as one of the most discussed works which traces the family saga and the life of a 41-year-old Greek-American, Cal Stephanides, an intersex by birth. The novel is about him looking back on his life as a girl and later as a man. He was born as Calliope with a 5 α -reductase deficiency and later decided to live as Cal as this for her is her ‘truth’.

The third selected text, *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-century French Hermaphrodite* is a memoir discovered by Michel Foucault during his research work on hermaphroditism for his book *History of Sexuality* (1978). Translated into English in 1980, it talks about the life of a hermaphrodite, Herculine Adélaïde Barbin during the nineteenth-century.

It is through the memoirs that one gets information regarding the life of Barbin. She was born as an intersex in Saint-Jean-d'Angély, a little town in France in 1838. Upon birth, she was immediately assigned as a girl and raised with the name Alexina. Even though they were poor, she fortunately received a charity scholarship which enabled her to study in a convent.

Not being able to keep her secret, Barbin confesses to the Bishop of La Rochelle, Jean-François-Anne Landriot who with Barbin's consent had to go against his duty to reveal her confession so that he could send her to a doctor for a more in-depth examination. Dr. Chesnet who carried out the examination discovered that Barbin's body type was very masculine though she had a vagina but smaller than normal along with a small penis and a testicle located inside her body. In other words and to borrow the medical terms of the 20th Century, she was a male pseudohermaphrodite.

Later, the court officially declared that Barbin was a male and should live, be treated and seen like so:

So, it was all over. According to my civil status, I was henceforth to belong to that of the human race which is called the stronger sex. I, who had been raised until the age of twenty-one in religious house, among shy female companions, was going to leave that whole delightful past far behind me, like Achilles, and enter the lists; armed with my weakness alone and my deep inexperience of men and things. (Barbin 89)

The press report stated:

One day some chance circumstance gives rise in your mind to doubt; an appeal is made to medical science; the error is recognized; and a court delivers a judgement that rectifies your birth record on the civil status registers. (Barbin 146)

Michael Foucault in 1970s discovered the memoirs of Barbin and republished the journals with the current title commenting that this was "a happy limbo of a non-identity" (xiii). Oscar Panizza also wrote a short story adaptation of the book which Foucault included in his version.

In his introduction to the book, Foucault analyses social institutions and their objective of curbing "the free choice of indeterminate individuals" (viii). He furthered his points stating that during the Middle Age these hermaphrodites were seen as people with mixture of both masculine and feminine traits. Upon reaching adulthood, they were given permission to choose between male and female sex. However, later when scientists decided that a person can have only one "true" gender, the Middle Age procedure was given up. Even when a certain individual showed traits supposed to be that of the opposite sex, the deviancies were considered unimportant. In *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory* (1989) Elizabeth A. Meese and Alice Parker

states how the memoirs of *Herculine Barbin* are relevant in contemporary society regarding gender ambiguity:

The memoir affirms society's stubborn insistence that gender ambiguity violates the truth. It likewise illustrates the persistence of the secret of sex as a mysterious enigma that escapes the viewer and the viewed, subject and object. The notion of a "true sex" operates at such a fundamental level that only by positioning one's self on the margins through violent removal, are we able to see and attack the pervasive encoding of sexuality through ideologies of gender, heterosexism, the family, the state and the church. (6)

The fourth selected text, *Golden Boy* (2013) is a heart-breaking novel by Abigail Tarttelin, a writer and an actress. She also holds the position of book editor in a UK magazine called Phoenix. *Golden Boy* received the Alex Award in 2014 and also was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in the year 2014. A coming-of age novel, Tarttelin employs multiple-perspective narrative style to depict various complexities of identity and its convergence with sexual violence. This style also helps the reader understand the fragmented situation and life of the protagonist Max which is marred by layers of secrets. In *Golden Boy*, the author makes the readers aware of the voices and perspectives of Max himself, his parents, his little brother Daniel, his doctor, and his girlfriend. Through these voices, the readers become knowledgeable of the often-unspoken realities which are predominant in the story and in everyday life: intersexuality and rape.

The book focuses on rebellion against choices made for someone by someone else and also the rejection of expectations raised by the society and the family. It also talks about the concept of choice, the lack of power and subversion of that power.

Max is in a pool of emotions and questions his condition and the prospect of his future, especially after falling in love with someone for the first time. The biggest question that pervades is his attempt to find his true identity.

This study, therefore examines the characters' alienation and isolation from society due to their identity. It further looks into the depiction of the society of the time and their treatment of a "different" sexuality.

The queer characters in the selected texts are placed in a society where strict adherence to the rules of gender binary suppresses their identity. These characters undergo a liminal period

because of their “ambiguous” sexuality while facing the heteronormative expectations of sex reassignment, gender binary and the politics of identity.

When one talks about sexually ambiguous people, it is the intersexuals that are mainly referred to and it is this group of people who are being studied in the realm of relevant theories to highlight their situation and their experiences.

Chapter 1: Introducing the Liminal

This chapter introduces the concept of “liminality” and how this in-between space serves as a space accommodating the intersexuals. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains the word “liminal” as: “Of or pertaining to the threshold or initial stage of a process.” Both the words liminal and liminality have been derived from the Latin word “limen,” which means “threshold”—that is, the bottom part of a doorway that must be crossed when entering a building. First introduced in 1909 by the ethnologist Arnold van Gennep in his seminal book *The Rites of Passage*, “liminality” refers to a state of ‘in between-ness’ during two important rites humans pass through: cultural and religious rites which “are a special kind of ceremonial act accompanying a person going from one social space to another which connects to different phases in life” (Gennep1-3). The various ceremonies consist of phases like birth, puberty, marriage etc. Each rite then consists of a territorial passage like crossing a threshold. According to Gennep:

The passage from one social position to another is identified with a territorial passage, such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares. (192)

In postcolonial theory, the notion of liminality is used to describe the “Third Space” to alleviate the counter-discourse for the dominant culture and the negative binaries present in the society: the self and the Other and the normal and the abnormal. Homi Bhabha advocates that liminality is the interstitial space “between fixed identifications” that allows the emergence of “cultural hybridity” that sustains difference without any pre-conceived notion or imposition of “hierarchy” (Bhabha, *Location* 5).

Indeterminacy, openness and most of all ambiguity are the three main characteristics one can find in a liminal space. A person’s sense of identity becomes blurred and sometimes

dissolves which most of the time leads to disorientation. However, as this is a period of transition, this stage opens a way to a new space and experience which may have different effects for different people according to their experiences and also with regards to the way they deal with situations. Analysing the concept of liminality, its geographical accounts and the individual in the liminal space, Julia Kristeva writes:

Instead of sounding himself as to his "being," he does so concerning his place: "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?" For the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic. A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines—for they are constituted of a non-object, the abject—constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. He has a sense of the danger, of the loss that the pseudo-object! attracting him represents for him, but he cannot help taking the risk at the very moment he sets himself apart. And the more he strays, the more he is saved.(8)

In the realm of sexuality, liminality serves as that space in which one goes into a realization of self, an epiphanic moment of self-understanding when it comes to one's physical body and one's understanding of it which may not involve the understanding of others towards the same. This, for some cases transcends the normative while the societal understanding may not be ignored.

This chapter also defines the word "intersexuality" the genesis of the term and what it stands for in contemporary society. "Intersexuality", simply refers to conditions like Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome and Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, "that lead to bodies having a mixture of male and female parts" (Fausto-Sterling 2000a 257).

Chapter 2: Reconstructing Sex: The Intervention of Medical Science

This chapter analyses the complex relationship between intersexuality and medical science as presented in the four selected texts. With the intrusion of medical science in their lives, the characters live a life which cannot be termed as "normal".

The protagonists are presented in such a way that they had a negative response to the interruption made to their sacred territory- their body. Addressing this issue, Judith Butler states the opposition of “the widespread practice of performing coercive surgery on infants and children with sexually indeterminate or hermaphrodite anatomy in the name of normalizing these bodies” (2004, 4).

The contemporary world of medical science has this policy of rushing procedures when it comes to intersexed child. With recent developments in science and the ability to recreate and reconstruct, there is a growing tendency to “fix” certain things which are not even broken. Calliope’s parents talked about this issue in their conversation: “‘Dr. Phil should have noticed when Callie was born’ [...]‘This whole thing could have been fixed back then’” (Eugenides 403). Here lies the difference of experiences between Calliope and Barbin; for Barbin the medical facility was absent which could have “fixed” her. There was the conventional society which chose to give her a label. This resulted in the presence of a self-constructed identity which was constantly in conflict with the perceived identity. Calliope on the other hand, though not surgically reassigned, had the option to choose her identity for herself. When her parents eventually sent her to a specialist, Callie was diagnosed as a “genetic XY raised as a female” (762). The doctor wanted to put her under a knife and “implement feminizing surgery” (765) which Callie rejected. Deciding to become Cal, she ran away, in order to avoid this surgery and hormone treatment. Going to San Francisco to determine a new identity for herself, she cut her long hair and wore men’s clothes. It is clear from the experience of Cal that intersexed individuals with their ambiguous sex occupy the in-between, the liminal space in the heterosexual matrix from which they have the option of an exit even though for some the decision may not be theirs. Their physical body may not be altered surgically by the medical community and they may retain their original form; however, Max (*Golden Boy*) and Cal (*Middlesex*) had the opportunity to decide the identity they wished to embrace. Also Wayne (*Annabel*), who underwent medical alteration to be raised as a male, eventually embarked on journey of self-discovery.

Eugenides depicts many aspects of the medical community and their role in the lives of the intersexuals. He also highlights the changes that take place in the “treatment” adopted for the intersexed infants. Before the intervention of medical science and its procedures, intersexed individuals were made to reclassify themselves based on their appearances and what seemed to

be their “true sex” on the outside as was the case of Max (*Golden Boy*). In his introduction to *Herculine Barbin*, Foucault talks about this term “true sex” saying:

[Western societies] have obstinately brought into play this question of ‘true sex’ in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures” (vii).

To Foucault, the concept of “true sex” contradicts the reality of the intersexuals based on the kind of anatomy they possess. So, the medical community makes it their prime duty to “fix” and “correct” the biological mistake in the intersexual body in order for it to fit into one “true sex” from the two socially accepted genders.

The selected texts explore the construction of identity by intersexual characters without medical intervention. The kind of free space from outside pressures as provided by cultures like Papua New Guinea and the Dominican Republic where the presence of the third sex like that of the intersexual is acknowledged. According to Sociologist Sharon Preves:

Children are allowed to go through a natural sex change from female to male at puberty without medical intervention. (40)

In short, this chapter studies the medical community’s attempt to break the ‘abnormal’ intersexuals in order to reassign the ‘true’ sex; move them out of the space they occupy in the conventional heteronormative set up: the in-between space, the liminal space.

Chapter 3: Beyond the Binary

This chapter examines how the heteronormative concept of gender binary pose complications for intersexuals; how certain technologies are being used in order to “normalize” the intersexual body basically violating it so that it could fit in one of the two available categories (Butler 2004).

The sexual system dominating the world today is not adequate at all to represent and express the vast array of sexuality. In “The Five Sexes”, Anne Fausto- Sterling writes:

But if the state and the legal system have an interest in maintaining a two-party sexual system, they are in defiance of nature. For biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male; and depending on how one calls the shots, one can argue that along that spectrum lie at least five sexes—and perhaps even more. (2000b 21)

The phobia that an ambiguous body disrupts and destabilises social organisation results in what Foucault states as:

La Mettrie's L'Homme-machine is both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of *dressage*, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used transformed and improved. (2001, 136)

Talking about the liminal space occupied by the intersexuals in the society Foucault (2003, 68-71) writes that the "hermaphrodite monsters" during the Middle Ages and the initial part of the 17th century were unfortunate because they were burned alive for possessing the two sexes compared to those in the 18th century who were lucky to be alive in a more understanding era. By the end of the 17th century, conviction exercised on hermaphrodites came to an end; however, people having sexual relationships with the same sex were convicted. Behaviour was the main factor for the conviction and no longer the nature of the body. This shift happened when hermaphrodites were given permission to choose either one of the sexes which falls aligned with their sexuality.

Butler, in *Undoing Gender* talks about the repercussions of living a life on the periphery or the liminal space non-recognition as a human being which Butler terms *becoming undone*. For the intersexuals, the only option for them is to undo themselves and abandon what they truly are in order to acquire the accepted. Being intersex is not an option so they have to be either male or female. Butler says:

The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity". (219).

The intersexual characters in the selected texts transcend conventional gender norms by embracing the duality that is within themselves. Though their journey and experiences in life may differ; however, they all experienced mental turmoil and the final acceptance of their own selfhood, except for Barbin. Eugenides depicts the journey which Cal took westward when he fled from the Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinic where he chose a pen over a scalpel. Barbin uses narrative to write himself into being, thus, creating an identity for himself. Max and Wayne confronted their fears and discovered a new found courage to accept their duality while, thereby, living beyond the binary of the accepted gender norm. In these texts, the intersex

characters dwelling in the third space illustrate the importance of creating an identity away from the strict gender dichotomy regarded to be the measurement of normalcy. Society needs to provide a space for the intersexuals to construct their own identity within the ambit of the society without any restrictive parameters.

By forcing them to choose either of the two biological sexes, they are deprived of the other option, a life free from having to choose. In short, their “hybridity” or “the third space that enables other positions to emerge” (Bhabha 211) is not acknowledged. Bhabha relates the third space to the concept of translation saying that it “puts together the traces of certain other meanings and discourses” (211).

In the entire selected texts one can see the emphasis placed on relationships specifically in the lives of the protagonists. This highlights the amount of role desire plays in the subject formation. This desire does not simply signify the desire for the other but also the desire to be desired by the other. Butler exclaims, “despite one’s best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other” (2004, 19).

This chapter brings forth the multifaceted nature of gender as it can also be indicative of sexuality. It can be said that gender is not some medical fact but instead, to borrow Butler’s concept, a social construct (1993,1).

It is possible for the presence of both the sexes in a body and live harmoniously without medical science intervening to favour one over the other. *Annabel’s* Wayne is an accurate example of this. Later in his teenage years, Wayne was informed that he was born a “true hermaphrodite” (Winter, 236) which meant that he had “everything boys have, and girls too. An almost complete presence of each” (236). This chapter study in dept this possibility of a correlation of multiplicity in a single body and acknowledging the presence of intersexuality in society as well as in individuals.

Chapter 4: Identity Politics

This chapter is an examination of the concept of gender categorization and one impulsively evaluated by others based on appearance, behavior and who they are attracted to. The chapter also probes on heteronormative society’s conventional ideology about gender identity and its prevention of the intersexuals from embracing and living their true self as “The ‘I’ has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation— or set of relations—to a set of norms” (Butler 2005, 8). Even though this need to depend on others to validate one’s identity is

difficult and is not productive, many people are trapped into it which in turn destroys many people mentally and psychologically.

Violence and discrimination from society is a common occurrence in the lives of the LGBTQIA+ community and can be said to be one of the ways in which sexual stigma is expressed. This stigma stems from the traditional belief of the society in which people who are sexually ambiguous are discredited as invalid in relation to heterosexuality. All the intersexed characters in the selected texts encounter violence one way or the other from others who failed to understand their identity.

This violence emerges from a profound desire to keep the order of binary gender natural or necessary, to make of it a structure, either natural or cultural, or both, that no human can oppose, and still remain human. If a person opposes norms of binary gender not just by having a critical point of view about them, but by incorporating norms critically, and that stylized opposition is legible, then it seems that violence emerges precisely as the demand to undo that legibility, to question its possibility, to render it unreal and impossible in the face of its appearance to the contrary. (Butler 2004, 35)

Due to the many discriminations and violence encountered, the intersexual characters dislocate themselves from their known environment to form an identity in isolation. Being sceptical of science, they have cravings from others which are the physical certainties. Though limited by their physical bodies, they depend on them in their quest of the truth and remove themselves from their comfort zone to craft their 'true' identity.

The chapter also emphasise the power of narration. Literally, Cal and Barbin had to write themselves into existence. For these liminal beings, who are blurring the lines of identity and gender, it is essential. Since they are incapable of recreating their body, they prioritize their own story over their body as their existence depends on the narration, their story.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The modern world is consciously forcing the representation of the intersexual characters in today's literature toward the liminal space, thus, limiting their appearance. This can be the reason why majority of the public is ignorant of their condition and even their existence. This also caused a huge problem in the process of the intersexuals' self-identification especially

with regard to gender construction. With the scarcity of materials, researchers and activists have to focus on works which portrays the experiences of transsexual and transgender individuals. This shared experience between intersexual, transsexual and transgender individuals is regarding the prejudices and discriminations they have to face in binary gender-oriented society who according to Michel Foucault “imposes homogeneity” (1975, 184) by stamping out difference. The deprivation exercised on Barbin, Max being raped by his friend who called him “freak”, the rape and assault Wayne experienced at Deadman’s Pond by Derek and his friends and Cal’s experience of violence and humiliation in the hands of multiple guys at San Francisco park are all similar to the hate crimes transgender people experience all around the world.

The studied intersexed characters considered a space whether it be geographical or psychological. Here, they construct a third space which permits them to be who they are away from the intolerant eyes of the society. According to Edward Soja, this third space:

Is a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expected to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other. (5)

These characters also shed light not only on how to observe the process of self-identification, how to view the body, the desire one have for the other as well as by the other but also the self-induced isolation for self-identification which causes a lot of problems for the intersexuals at large. These intersexuals are in constant conflict with the society continuously trying to banish, castrate and even correct them, thus maiming them. They underscore the need for a diversion from this strict binary gender system which restricts the body. The texts, *Herculine Barbin*, *Middlesex*, *Golden Boy* and *Annabel* rejects the limited categories of gender and emphasize the expansion and advocacy of the importance of inclusion of bodies like Calliope, Max, Alexina and Wayne rather than eradicating, marginalizing or even mutilating them in order for them to fit into the current narrow conventional categorizations.

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