Locating the Bildungsroman in Post-Millennial Anglophone Narratives with Intersex Representations

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Elli Kyrmanidou

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Erstgutacher: Prof. Dr. Michael Hochgeschwender

Zweitgutacher: Prof. Dr. Pierre-Héli Monot

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wie viel hat sich verändert, seit Goethes Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, der Prototyp des Bildungsromans für viele, im Jahr 1896 erstmals veröffentlicht wurde? Und inwieweit beeinflusst die Erfahrung des Aufwachsens als intersexuelles Kind die Identitätsfindung und die persönliche Entwicklung eines jungen intersexuellen Menschen? Diese Fragen werden anhand von sechs ausgewählten Romanen untersucht, die zeigen, wie zeitgenössische Coming-of-Age-Geschichten mit intersexuellen Protagonisten mit ihrem intersexuellen Subjektsein zurechtkommen. In dieser Arbeit nutze ich das jüngste Aufkommen von Erzählungen mit intersexuellen Darstellungen, um Wege aufzuzeigen, wie das Genre des Bildungsromans zu einem besseren Verständnis der Entwicklung intersexueller Identität beitragen kann. In meinen Analysen von Kathleen Winters *Annabel* (2010), Lianne Simons *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* (2012), Abigail Tarttelins *Golden Boy* (2013), Alyssa Brugmans *Alex as Well* (2013), Jane Hoppens *In Between* (2013) und Jeffrey Eugenides *Middlesex* (2003) argumentiere ich, dass der rote Faden, der alle Romane verbindet, die Art und Weise ist, wie ihre Protagonisten ihre Bildung verhandeln, und die Art und Weise, wie intersexuelle Studien zum Prozess der Identitätsbildung beitragen. Die Protagonisten beanspruchen ihre Identität durch Verhandlungen mit sich selbst und der Gesellschaft, durch die Ablehnung medizinischer Eingriffe und durch die Bekräftigung ihrer intersexuellen Verkörperung, die es ihr erlaubt oder verbietet, Begehren zu empfinden und auszudrücken.

Der Bildungsroman, eine diachronische Gattung, ist ein hochkomplexer Ort der literarischen Analyse. Es ist jedoch auch ein Ort, an dem das entstehende Feld der Intersex-Studien gedeihen kann. Es wäre unmöglich, die Darstellung einer ganzen Gattung mit definitorischen Mitteln der Literatur des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts vorzunehmen. Goethes Bildungsbegriff hat sich im Vergleich zu seiner Definition im 21. Jahrhundert dramatisch

verändert. Es ist die Flexibilität über soziale Strukturen hinweg, die den Weg für vielfältige Interpretationen der eigenen Identität und die Neudefinition des Selbst eröffnet. Das Genre des Bildungsromans erfährt seit mehr als zwei Jahrhunderten Erweiterungen seiner thematischen und generischen Grenzen und fördert auf diese Weise Fluidität und Kontinuität. Die Definition des Begriffs der Gattung selbst war kein reibungsloser Vorgang. Das liegt wahrscheinlich daran, dass Bildung ein "vieldeutiges Bestimmungswort" ist, wie Jacobs und Krause interessanterweise festgestellt haben. Zunächst überschritt es die nationalen Grenzen des deutschen Bildungsideals und wurde anschließend international übernommen. Dann überschritt es die geschlechtsspezifischen Grenzen des männlichen Protagonisten, als Romane mit weiblicher Entwicklung aufkamen. Schließlich weitete sie sich auf die Kolonial- und Minderheitenforschung aus. Ist es möglich, dass diese Norm weitere Veränderungen erfährt, so dass mehr soziale Gruppen in ihren Platz finden können? Bei der Dissertation der sechs Romane gehe ich davon aus, dass die Gattung des Bildungsromans sich als günstig erweist, weil sie ein Werkzeug für die Wahrnehmung von Vorstellungen von Intersexualität als verständlich ist und die Konstruktion intersexueller Subjekte beeinflusst.

Sex, Gender und Sexualität sind Begriffe, die seit langem diskutiert werden und die die Grenzen zwischen Heteronormativität und Bigender verwischen. Vorstellungen, die Sex und Gender als in Stein gemeißelt und für immer gleichbleibend ansahen, wurden durch die Queer-Theorie, die den LGBTQI-Aktivismus förderte, und durch die kontinuierliche Veröffentlichung von Geschichten über das Coming-Out erschüttert. In den letzten zehn Jahren wurden mehr und mehr Forschungen über Intersexualität und die Komplikationen eines Lebens zwischen den beiden gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Geschlechtern durchgeführt.

Der intersexuelle Bildungsroman trägt zu literarischen Darstellungen bei, die untersuchen, wie die Wissenschaft im Laufe der Jahre die Kultur geformt hat und wie der Einsatz ästhetischer Mittel die intersexuelle Subjektbildung beeinflusst. Alle Romane meiner

Arbeit transzendieren nicht nur traditionelle Geschlechterstereotypen, sondern auch die in den siebziger Jahren unter Kulturtheoretikern vorherrschende Unterscheidung zwischen Sex und Gender. Sie grenzen außerdem an Fragen, die von der in den neunziger Jahren aufkommenden Queer-Theorie aufgeworfen wurden, und heben die oben genannte Unterscheidung auf, die Geschlecht als eine performative Handlung begreift. Diese Fragen beziehen sich indirekt auf den Bildungsroman, da dieses Genre stereotypische Vorstellungen von Geschlecht verstärkt, indem es sie entweder bewertet oder dekonstruiert, während es das Individuum per Definition als eine Kombination aus Natur und Erziehung darstellt. Der Bildungsroman beschreibt das Erwachsenwerden eines jungen, meist männlichen Jugendlichen. Das Spannungsfeld, in dem sich ein Roman als Bildungsroman behaupten kann, wächst auch mehr als 200 Jahre nach Goethes Prototyp und erweitert die Bildungsroman-Debatte. Den meisten Kritikern fällt es schwer, die genauen Eigenheiten eines echten Bildungsromans festzulegen, und sie streiten darüber, ob diese Gattung restriktiv sei oder sich öffnen und an kulturelle und historische Veränderungen anpassen sollte. Die überwältigende Anzahl von Studien über Bildungsromane ist möglicherweise ein Hinweis auf die Widerstandsfähigkeit des Genres in der internationalen Literatur und im Laufe der Jahrhunderte. Da männliche und weibliche geschlechtliche Identitäten im Bildungsroman-Kanon vertreten waren und sind, wird in dieser Arbeit argumentiert, dass das Genre die Art und Weise darstellt, wie intersexuelle Identitäten in den ausgewählten Romanen der englischsprachigen Literatur des einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts diskursiv geformt werden. Der intersexuelle Bildungsroman fügt sich in die wachsende kritische Literatur über Intersexualität und die Literatur über Entwicklungspsychologie ein.

Diese Dissertation untersucht auch, wie das Ideal der klassischen Bildung seine Grenzen überschreitet, da der intersexuelle Bildungsroman vom traditionellen Modell abweicht, in dem die persönliche Entwicklung in Verbindung mit einer harmonischen

sozialen Integration die Regel war. In den ausgewählten Romanen gehen die Protagonisten den Weg der Bildung, indem sie neue Bedingungen ihrer Identität aushandeln; mit anderen Worten, indem sie ihre Identitäten verlieren und neu erschaffen, und so neue Wege der intersexuellen Verständlichkeit schaffen. Der Übergang von der Adoleszenz ins Erwachsenenalter schafft neue Modelle des Wachstums einer intersexuellen Potenzialität auf gesellschaftlicher Ebene.

Vor diesem Hintergrund ist es sinnvoll, die Romane eingehend zu lesen und die verschiedenen Rollen, Situationen, Eigenschaften und Persönlichkeiten zu verstehen, die in der Erzählung eine Rolle spielen, und zu versuchen, die Eigenschaften des intersexuellen Bildungsromans herauszustellen. Ich schlage vor, dass die Identifizierung von gemeinsamen Motiven und Themen, die in den Romanen dieser Studie auftauchen, eine Methode ist, um die Kategorie der intersexuellen Bildungsromane zu klassifizieren und ein Muster der erzählerischen Darstellung einer intersexuellen Identität in der Fiktion zu erkennen. Darüber hinaus erleichtert sie die Forschung insofern, als sie ein Instrument zur Verfügung stellt, um die intersexuelle Adoleszenz anhand verschiedener Entwicklungsstufen zu analysieren, die durch die Verwendung von Motiven und Themen in der Fiktion verstärkt werden. In diesem Sinne erscheint es sinnvoll, die Motive und Themen als Vergleichseinheiten für diese Studie zu verwenden, da alle Romane einige gemeinsame Merkmale aufweisen. Dennoch habe ich jeden Roman in einem eigenen Kapitel untersucht und dabei Elemente des Wachstums der intersexuellen Protagonisten und ihrer Interaktion mit ihrer Umwelt berücksichtigt.

Im ersten Teil dieser Einführung habe ich einen großen Teil meiner Methodik dargelegt, nämlich die Festlegung der wichtigsten Begriffe meiner Studie, wie Bildungsroman und Intersexualität. Um diese beiden Begriffe zusammenzubringen und in dem Bemühen, Literatur und Intersex-Studien zu verbinden, basiert meine Arbeit auf einer vergleichenden Analyse verschiedener Wissensbestände in Kombination mit einer kritischen

Textanalyse der veröffentlichten Literatur der sechs intersexuellen Romane. Entscheidend für das Verständnis meiner Analyse ist die Untersuchung des Genres mit besonderem Bezug auf seine historische Bedeutung. Meine Methodik besteht in erster Linie in der genauen Lektüre anglophoner Romane der Nach-Millennium-Zeit mit intersexuellen Darstellungen. Obwohl es eine Reihe von autobiographischen intersexuellen Erzählungen gibt, habe ich mich bewusst dafür entschieden, nur fiktionale Texte einzubeziehen, da mich vor allem interessiert, wie intersexuelle Menschen in der dominanten Kultur wahrgenommen werden. Da es kaum Literatur gibt, in der Intersexualität dargestellt wird, habe ich mich auch dafür entschieden, Romane in meine Untersuchung einzubeziehen, die zur Tradition der Jugendromane gehören, da ich mich mehr auf die Art und Weise konzentriere, wie der Bildungsprozess der intersexuellen Charaktere dargestellt wird, und weniger auf das Genre oder den narratologischen Stil, den jeder Roman hat. Für die Zwecke dieser Untersuchung und weil sich Young-Adult-Romane historisch aus der Bildungsroman-Tradition entwickelt haben, habe ich beschlossen, beide in meine Analyse einzubeziehen. Ob sich der Ton und die Stimme des Romans an Erwachsene oder an Jugendliche richtet, gehört nicht zu meiner Untersuchung. Ich habe beschlossen, mich mit Erzählungen zu beschäftigen, die sich darauf konzentrieren, wie sich der Reifungsprozess der Personen entwickelt, während sie versuchen, ihre intersexuelle Identität zu konstruieren.

Ich sehe in diesem Projekt die Gelegenheit, dass zeitgenössische intersexuelle Darstellungen in einen Dialog mit den Helden der traditionellen Bildungsromane und den medizinischen Autoritäten treten und ihre Verständlichkeit auf eigene Weise aushandeln können. Die prägenden Konflikte zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft werden in den Romanen dargestellt und bilden die Bildung ihrer Protagonisten. Obwohl das Thema Intersexualität noch zu wenig erforscht ist, bietet diese Dissertation einen Raum, in dem

Intersexualität in verschiedenen Kontexten, angefangen von der Geschichte bis hin zu ihrer Darstellung in der Literatur, eine Rolle spielt.

Meine Forschung ist ein Versuch, das untertheoretisierte Thema der intersexuellen Bildung und der intersexuellen Repräsentationen in der Nach-Millennium-Zeit, zeitgenössischen Englischen Bildungsromanen zu untersuchen. Dabei stoße ich auf Überschneidungen mit Gender-, Queer-, behinderten- und feministischen Theorien und realisiere die interdisziplinäre Analyse von Körperheterogenität.

Contents

“Intersexuality is nothing more than a perpetually shifting phantasm in the collective psyche of medicine and culture.”

- M. Holmes, *Rethinking the Meaning and Management of Intersexuality*

1 INTRODUCTION

How much has changed since Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*, the prototype Bildungsroman for many, was first published in 1896? And, at the same time, to what extent does the experience of growing up intersex affect the identity exploration and the personal development of a young intersex individual? These questions are explored though the study of six selected novels that probe how contemporary Coming of Age stories with intersex protagonists come to terms with their intersex subjecthood. In this thesis, I take advantage of the recent emergence of narratives with intersex representations to propose ways in which the Bildungsroman genre can contribute to a better understanding of intersex identity development. In my analyses of Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* (2010), Lianne Simon's *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* (2012), Abigail Tarttelin's *Golden Boy* (2013), Alyssa Brugman's *Alex as Well* (2013), Jane Hoppen's *In Between* (2013) and Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2003), I argue that the thread that connects all the novels is the way their protagonist negotiate their Bildung, and the way intersex studies contribute to the process of identity formation. The protagonists re-claim their identities through negotiations with the self and society, through rejection of medical intervention and through the reaffirmation of their intersex embodiment allowing or forbidding it to feel and express desire.

The Bildungsroman, a genre that is diachronically persistent, is a highly complex site of literary analysis. However, it is also a site where the emerging field of intersex studies can flourish. It would be impossible to undertake the depiction of a whole genre by definitional means of literature dating back to the eighteenth century. The very notion of the Goethean Bildung has undergone dramatic changes if compared to its twenty-first century definition. "Heterosexuality, social involvement, healthy disillusionment, 'normality', [and] adulthood"

(Abel, Hirsch and Langland 27) are the stages of the hero's development according to the Bildungsroman archetype. But are these stages still answered in the twenty-first century?

It is the flexibility across social structures that opens up the way for multiple interpretations of one's identity and the redefinition of the self. The Bildungsroman genre has been experiencing extensions to its thematic and generic limits for more than two centuries, promoting in such manner fluidity and continuity. Defining the very notion of the genre has not been a smooth procedure. This is probably because Bildung is a "vieldeutiges Bestimmungswort"[1] (18), as Jacobs and Krause have interestingly pointed out. First, it crossed the national boundaries of the German ideal of Bildung and subsequently, it was adopted internationally. Then it transcended the gender boundaries of the male protagonist as novels of female development made an appearance. Ultimately, it expanded into colonial and minority studies. Is it possible that this norm might undergo further transformations so that more social groups can find space for representation within its ground? In my reading of the six novels, I assume that the genre of the Bildungsroman qualifies as propitious because it is a tool for the perception of notions of intersex as intelligible and that it informs the intersex subject construction.

Sex, gender, and sexuality are terms that have been debated for a long time and blur the lines between heteronormativity and bigenderism. Ideas that viewed sex and gender as set in stone and eternally consistent have come to shatter as a result of queer theory that promoted LGBTQI activism and the continuous publication of stories about coming out of the closet. In the last decade, more and more research has been done on intersexuality and the complications of living between the two socially accepted sexes.

Within this context, I am exploring the theoretical boundaries of the Bildungsroman genre and I seek the conceptual limitations and whether they exist indeed. Is the

[1] ambiguously defining word

Bildungsroman a ‘hypertrophic’ concept, as Moretti has claimed (15), and is it thus outmoded and unable to represent characters of contemporary culture like young intersex ones? Or is it plausible to talk about the expansion of the genre and the inclusion of inevitably alternative identities different from Wilhelm Meister? The second question of my study is whether there are distinct stages of identity construction which are represented in all the novels examined here and which are the recurrent literary motifs employed by the authors in the recounting of the intersex coming of age story.

While I hardly maintain that the six analyzed novels constitute a literary tradition per se, I believe that their exploration introduces a subgenre that deviates from the prototypical Bildungsroman. My thesis examines the representation of intersex characters in contemporary coming of age stories and the different ways intersex identity is culturally constructed and/or unsettled.

The intersex Bildungsroman contributes to literary representations that examine how over the years science has shaped culture and how the use of aesthetic means informs the intersex subject formation. All the novels of my work transcend not only traditional gender stereotypes, but also the distinction between sex and gender that was prevalent among cultural theorists in the nineteen-seventies. They further border on questions raised by queer theory, which appeared in the ninety nineties, and overturn the abovementioned distinction that perceives gender as a performative action. These issues relate indirectly to the Bildungsroman as this genre intensifies stereotypical notions of gender, either by appraising them or by deconstructing them, while it also presents, by definition, the individual as a combination of both nature and nurture. The Bildungsroman par excellence describes the coming of age of a young, usually male, adolescent. The tensions around which a novel can be claimed as a Bildungsroman continue to grow more than 200 years after Goethe’s prototype and expand the Bildungsroman debate. Most critics have difficulty in pinning down

the exact characteristics of a genuine Bildungsroman and they have been debating about whether this genre should be restrictive or open up and adjust to cultural and historical changes. The overwhelming body of studies of Bildungsromane is possibly suggestive of the resilience of the genre within international literature and throughout the ages. As male and female gendered identities have been and continue to be represented in the Bildungsroman canon, this thesis argues that the genre presents the way intersex identities are discursively formed in the chosen novels of the twenty-first century Anglophone literature. The intersex Bildungsroman adds up to the growing critical literature on intersexuality and the literature on developmental psychology.

This dissertation also examines how the ideal of the classic Bildung transcends its boundaries as the intersex Bildungsroman diverges from the traditional model where personal development combined with a harmonious social integration was the rule. In the chosen novels, the protagonists follow the path of formation by negotiating new terms of their identity; in other words, by losing and remaking their identities on their own terms creating, thus, new ways of intersex intelligibility. The transition from adolescence into adulthood establishes new models of growth of an intersex potentiality on societal levels.

Within Hirsch's claim that "society is the antagonist of the Bildungsroman" (297) imposing norms on the individual and setting limits on the multiplicity of identities lies my own overlying assumption that the battle between society and the intersex individual is portrayed in the chosen novels. Approaching the Bildungsroman in ways that demarcate its traditional boundaries "reveals a truer understanding of how Bildung is frustrating and frustrated" (Smith 220). In my reading of the texts, I will show how literature can contribute to a better understanding of intersexuality.

The study of motifs and narrative tropes has been essential for folklore studies because the appearance of common patterns in folk tales around the world and throughout history implied the existence of a network of recurrent elements that needed to be explored and later classified. But motifs and themes are not only found in folk tales. They are literary devices that almost every author uses to support the structure of the narration and to denote larger meanings to images and ideas. Motifs and themes are not only significant for plot structure but also interesting to explore because they comprise a system for interpretation and classification of stories in different cultures and from different times. The use of motifs and narrative patterns have facilitated my research and the literary interpretation of the narratives included in this thesis. The systematization of common thematic elements can clarify the subgenre of the intersex Bildungsroman and I have used it as a comparative unit in my research.

A universally accepted definition of motifs and themes has been an impossible endeavor to achieve partly because of the difficulty of combining the field of folklore studies, where the motif/theme research started, with the field of literature studies and partly because researchers have interpreted the usage of the motif within the sphere of psychology, history and anthropology. However, in brief, it can be claimed that motifs are small thematic elements which, combined together, comprise a theme in a story or a narration. My starting point will be the interpretation of early Formalist Veselovsky, who in the beginning of the twentieth century provided a definition for the often complicating term of motif found in folk tales: “By *motif* I mean the simplest narrative *unit*, corresponding imagistically to the diverse needs of a primitive mind and to the needs of ordinary perception [... and] such motifs could have arisen independently of each other and nonetheless could still have exhibited similar

features at one and the same time".[2] Veselovsky uses this interpretation to highlight the commonality of motif recurrence in folk tales within different cultural and historical milieus. He then goes on to regard the theme as equivalent to the plot "in which a variety of motif-situations have been woven".[3] Moreover, Stith Thompson's pivotal definition and usage of the term motif is also instrumental for the interpretation of the motifs found in the intersex Bildungsroman. According to his theory, a motif is "the smallest element in a tale having the power to persist in tradition" and motifs usually fall into the classifications of actors, certain items, and incidents (416). This classification of motifs has led to the creation of the Thompson's Index of Motifs which has smoothed the way for my analysis because it was used as an elementary codification of narrative interpretation. I argue that there are certain motifs in the six novels of this study that the narration of intersex identity development is structured around.

With this in mind, it is useful to read the novels in depth and to understand the various roles, situations, traits and personalities involved in the narration and attempt to highlight the markers of the intersex Bildungsroman. I suggest that identifying common motifs and themes that appear within the novels of this study is a method of classifying the intersex Bildungsroman category and distinguishing a pattern of narrative representation for an intersex identity in fiction. Furthermore, it facilitates the research in that it provides an instrument to analyze intersex adolescence through distinct stages of development which are reinforced by the use of motifs and themes in fiction. In this sense, using the motifs and themes as comparative units for this study seems sensible as all the novels share some common characteristics. However, I have explored each novel in a separate chapter taking

[2] Shklovsky translated A. N. Veselofksy's interpretation of myth and theme from Russian in his "The Relationship between Devices of Plot Construction and General Devices of Style". *Theory of Prose*. Trans. Benjamin Sher. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990, p.16.
[3] Ibid.

into consideration elements of the intersex protagonists' growth and interaction with their environment.

In the first part of this introduction, I set out a big part of my methodology which is to establish the major terms of my study, such as the Bildungsroman and intersex. In order to bring these two terms together and in an effort to combine literature with intersex studies, my thesis is modelled around a framework of comparative analysis of various bodies of knowledge in combination with a critical textual analysis of the published literature of the six intersex novels. Crucial to the understanding of my analysis is the investigation of the genre with special reference to its historical significance. My methodology consists primarily of the close reading of post-millennial Anglophone novels with intersex representations. Although there is a number of autobiographical intersex narratives, I have deliberately chosen to include only fictional texts because I am mainly interested in how intersex individuals are perceived within dominant cultures. Since literature with intersex representation is scarce, I have also chosen to include in my research novels that belong to the Young Adult novel tradition because I am more focused on the way the Bildungsprocess of the intersex characters is depicted and less on the genre or the narratological style each novel has. For the purpose of this research, and because historically Young Adult novels have evolved from the Bildungsroman tradition, I have decided to include both of them in my analysis. Whether the novel's tone and voice addresses adults or teenagers is not within the scope of my research intentions. I decided to focus on narratives that centered on how the individuals' maturation process developed while trying to construct an intersex identity.

My reasons for including all the novels into the Bildungsroman tradition were manifold. First, while there is a noteworthy canon of heteronormative Bildungsromane the same cannot be said for Bildungsromane with intersex representations that debate binary culture, and that are useful sources of information about a totally different process of personal

growth. Second, I intentionally chose novels written in the twenty-first century because inarguably the Bildungsroman tradition has evolved since its first appearance, and its strict limitations set formerly by Buckley can now be pushed beyond normative subjectivity. Last, it should not be ignored that youth culture emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and it brought along fiction where childhood and adolescence were depicted.

The novels included in this research are not the only ones with adolescent intersex interpretations. There is a big part of fiction where intersex is a possibility, but it belongs to a posthuman depiction of a future world where a plurality of genders is portrayed. My choice to include novels where intersex representation face real challenges was purposeful. This was specifically necessary because using characters of a utopian future would position intersex, once again, into the imaginary echoing, thus, notions of their traumatic past.

While the chapters are separated, they speak to themselves as their central concern is the formation of the Bildungsprocess for the protagonists of the novels. I begin with a review of the history of the genre of the Bildungsroman and summary of recent literature on the subject. Following this, I propose a new framework for theorizing the intersex Bildungsroman and demonstrate its crucial role in intersex intelligibility. Chapters Four to Nine focus on the novels included in my study. More specifically, Chapter Four explores *Annabel,* Chapter Five *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite*, Chapter Six *Golden Boy*, Chapter Seven *Alex as Well*, Chapter Eight *In Between*, and Chapter Nine *Middlesex.*

I see this project as an opportunity where contemporary intersex representations can engage in a dialogue with the heroes of the traditional Bildungsroman and the medical authorities and can negotiate their intelligibility on their own terms. The formative conflicts between the individual and society are depicted in the novels and form the Bildung of their protagonists. Although intersex is underexplored, this dissertation provides a space where the

intersex is involved in various contexts beginning from the historical and moving towards its representation in literature.

I would also like to stress the limitations of my research. Although intersex is a minority, all the protagonists of the novels are light-skinned, able-bodied (or not, if seen from the disability lens) middle-class, representing cultures that are depart from other social minorities. Furthermore, my privilege as a white, middle-class cisgender woman puts me in a position I have advertently tried to depart from. However hard my effort is, there are paths of the intersex identity that are left untrodden.

My research is an effort to explore the undertheorized issue of intersex Bildung and intersex representations in post-millennial, contemporary Anglophone Bildungsromane. In doing so, intersections of gender, queer, disability, feminist theories are encountered, and the interdisciplinary analysis of body heterogeneity is celebrated.

2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN

2.1 DEFINITION OF THE GENRE

The term Bildungsroman connotes the genre in which depictions of adolescence are illustrated and the personal development of the young protagonist is extensively mirrored. The Bildungsroman describes the literal or metaphorical journey of the hero from a young age to the first adult years, during which he ('he' is used in this context intentionally) undergoes various personal and social challenges until he reaches a certain stage of maturity resulting from these often-alienating experiences. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* M. H. Abrams explains that the Bildungsroman illustrates the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied ordeals - and often through a spiritual crisis - into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world (193). The esoteric conflict of the hero, rooted in two contending forces, namely individuation and socialization, is clearly explained by Rau: "Initially the aim of this journey is reconciliation between the desire for individuation (self-fulfillment) and the demands for socialization (adaptation to a given social reality)" (58). The hero is caught between a battle of belonging and not-belonging, of solitariness and companionship. What this genre emphasizes is the hero's progression from the early years of naiveté, followed by numerous experiences, involving the self and the other, which in the end lead towards an understanding of the world, its dissonances, and his place in it.

This personal and social awareness most often evokes a change in the trajectory of the protagonist's life which was primarily bound to conform to societal compromises and mirror the values of society indubitably until the moment of a sheer epiphany. At that moment of lucid revelation, the hero encounters an unfamiliar order of the world, where the reinvention of the self is necessary for his survival: "[T]he process of the man's re-education is

interwoven with the process of society's breakdown and reconstruction, that is, with historical process" (M. Bakhtin 234). Bakhtin clarifies the very notion of Bildung in itself, that is to deconstruct all acquired knowledge and rebuild the new self from the ground, like the myth of the phoenix. Consequently, the Bildungsroman carries the duty of recasting the standards of the old world and simultaneously succeeds in the reaffirmation of a subject formation narrative. Through various experiences of a personal matter, for example, an unrequited or lost love, a breakaway from the family or even a disapproval of societal norms, the hero remodels the established order in such a way that an alternative sphere of living arises.

When the Bildungsroman genre emerged in the late eighteenth century in its most representative novel Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* in 1795-1796, the definition of the exact term 'Bildungsroman' was still unknown as a precise term, but the relation of this type of novel to the notions of Enlightenment about education was strong. The German historian Wilhelm Dilthey made this novelistic category widely popular in his *Poetry and Experience* in 1906 by introducing the term to the public, strengthening, thus, the connection between the German literary tradition and the genre itself. A tradition that has been carried to the present since the German term is more frequently used than its English translation 'Coming-of-age novel' or 'novel of formation'[4]. This is not coincidental, of course. There are objections to whether *Bildung* can be interpreted as *formation* without a change in the core of its meaning. Nonetheless, the first indication of this new literary genre was not given by Dilthey in the beginning of the twentieth century but many decades before.

[4] The terms 'Coming-of-age' novel and 'Bildungsroman' can sometimes be used interchangeably as there is no proof of difference in definition between the two literary terms apart from their English and German linguistic origin respectively. Kontje has suggested that the English terms *novel of development, novel of education* and *novel of formation* can also be used as a translation of the Bildungsroman, but many authors adopt the German term in order to signify its German origin (IX). Buckley proposed the English variation *novel of youth* and *novel of education* as another possible choice, but he also stresses out the inadequacy of these variations as they do not comply with the primary notion of Bildung and its goal of self-development (viii).

Almost one and a half century earlier, in 1774, the German scholar Christian Friedrich von Blanckenburg noticed that a different kind of novel was in the making and tried to give life to this new novelistic classification by outlining its main features, albeit without ever mentioning the word 'Bildungsroman'. Since Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* had not yet come to light, he based his remarks about the new literary tradition on Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* (1766/67), on the English novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) by Samuel Richardson and on *Tom Jones* (1749) by Henry Fieldings, all of which he recognized as a new type of novel. In his words, the fundamental role of every novel was explicitly marked as "[d]ie Bildung und Formation des Helden[5]" (von Blanckenburg 321) blurring the lines between the aesthetic and thematic mission of a novel, according to novel theory. The self-critical, esoteric, and often ruthless hero of the romantic novel encountered the hero of another genre, whose character was molded by every deeply experienced encounter in his life. There was a distinct effort to differentiate the Bildungsroman era from the Romantic literary period in order to accentuate the importance of the parting from the realm of Romanticism. Romantic characters were rather 'stylized figures' that expanded into psychological archetypes, whereas the hero of the novel dealt with personality and character formation in a realistic context (N. Frye 305). Nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that the Bildungsroman flourished within the literary movement of romanticism. Similarly, Selbmann comments on Blanckenburg's attempt to outline the fundamental principles of the new genre by adding a distinct and sophisticated quality to the traditional novel: "Insofern kann man davon sprechen, dass Blanckenburg mit seiner Definition den Bildungsroman entwirft, indem er den herkömmlichen Roman verinnerlicht, didaktisiert und ästhetisch aufwertet[6]" (17). Blanckenburg insisted on the esoteric essence of the novel because he believed that the principal duty of the novel is character development: "Die Ausbildung und Formung, die ein

[5] "the hero's education and character formation" (translation E.K.).

[6] "In this respect, we can claim that, with his definition, Blanckenburg outlines the Bildungsroman by internalizing, didacticizing, and esthetically upgrading the conventional novel" (translation E.K.).

Charakter durch seine mancherley Begegnisse erhalten kann, oder noch eigentlicher, seine inner Geschichte, das Wesentliche und Eigentümliche eines Romans ist[7]" (392). Without ever articulating the word 'Bildungsroman', he surprisingly described the elemental task of this genre from its debut, mainly the depiction of the hero's personal development.

However, it was Karl Morgenstern who first mentioned and introduced the original term during an academic lecture at the University of Dorpat (now Tartu in Estonia) in 1819. Morgenstern described the Bildungsroman as a new literary category between epos and drama:

> *Bildungsroman* wird er heißen dürfen, erstens und vorzüglich wegen seines Stoffs, weil er des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang und Fortgang bis zur einer gewisse Stufe der Vollendung darstellt. [...] [Z]weytens aber auch, weil er gerade durch diese Darstellung des Lesers Bildung, in weiterm Umfange als jede andere Art des Romans, fördert[8]. (Köhn 5)

In his lecture entitled "On the Nature of the Bildungsroman" he commented that the role of the Bildungsroman is "to depict a human being who develops toward his true nature by means of a collaboration of his inner dispositions with outer circumstances. The goal of this development is a perfect equilibrium, combining harmony with freedom" (Morgenstern and Boes 656). The German audience of the lecture welcomed the new term with great enthusiasm since it presented an exaltation of German life and German thought. Morgenstern implied that the German Bildungsroman could become a model of ethics and morals for the new European man who would benefit from the German perspective of life as well. Taking into consideration the historical momentum of that period, during which Prussia had

[7] The education and development that a character gains through many kinds of encounters, or actually his inner story are the most important and characteristic features of a novel (translation E.K.).

[8] It may be called *Bildungsroman*. Firstly, and primarily, on account of its content, since it depicts the development of the hero in its beginning and progress until a certain point of completion. But also, secondly because just this depiction promotes the reader's development in such an extent like any o other sort of novel (translation E.K.).

contributed to the victory over Napoleon and while discussions about a solidly unified German nation were being held, Morgenstern's emphasis on the function of the genre as a glorifying symbol of German life is historically and nationally relevant. Therefore, the roots of the association between the traditional Bildungsroman and the German intellect lie partly within the concept of capitalizing on the genre as a means of German praise. Consequently, from time to time, the German literary view has set stringent guidelines on which novels classify as Bildungsromane. This has led to controversies among Bildungsroman critics, some of whom have concluded that novels, which are relatively indisputably regarded as paradigmatic examples of the genre, such as Dickens' *Great Expectations*, are excluded from the Bildungsroman canon because they do not trace back to German thought.

Coming back to the Diltheyan popularization of the term, it was his contribution, unclouded by modernist ideologies and ambiguous translations, that established the very classification of the genre and set the scene for the nationalization of the genre:"[...] Dilthey's work serves as a convenient point of departure for the history of the genre between 1870 and 1945, a period marked by the increasing entanglement of literary history and political ideology" (Kontje 28). Based on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and Hölderlin's *Hyperion* (1797 and 1799), Dilthey exposed the details that made the Bildungsroman so different from all the other novels that had been written until then: "[T]he poet for the first time makes manifest the darker features buried deep in life's countenance with a power that only lived experience can provide" (336). In other words, the intense experiences of the Bildungsroman hero induce such a feeling of interiority and isolation from the world that led to the reinvention of the self in an unknown reality. He clarified the stages which the Bildungsroman hero has to conquer until he reaches the final stage of self-knowledge and self-realization known in German as 'Bildung', in Greek as 'paideia' and in Latin as 'humanitas': "[I]t begins with naïve perfection, deriving from one's nature alone, and it aims

at the ideal to which we can elevate ourselves through a rigorous education. In between we observe highlights of the eccentric development of . . . [the] heroes" (Dilthey 320). In other words, Bildung is a sequence of events that shape the hero's character and metamorphose him into a more sober self. This metamorphosis is depicted in the Bildungsroman, which Bakhtin characterizes as follows:

> Another type of cyclical emergence […], traces a typically repeating path of man's emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality. This path can be complicated in the end by varying degrees of skepticism and resignation. This kind of novel of emergence typically depicts the world and life as experience, as a school through which every person must pass and derive one and the same result: one becomes more sober, experiencing some degree of resignation. (Speech Genres and Other Late Essays 22)

Bakhtin's analogy of the Bildung process to a cyclical movement stresses the perpetuality of the process and its lack of a definite, final stage as the process of becoming and developing is unremitting and departs from the traditional genre which considered the integration of the hero into society the final stage of the Bildungsroman.

The German intellect was the representative advocate for the depiction of the ideal Bildung, hence "the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* [...] is a product of sociological circumstances that obtained only in the German principalities, and therefore has to be explicitly contrasted with the high realist works produced in England and France" (Boes 232). Bildung became in fashion within the German bourgeoisie at that time. The assumption that Bildungsroman experts could only be found in German literature following a Goethean tradition, monopolized the genre criticism during that period but also gained popularity since Goethe's work was the lasting paradigm of the genre. Although it should be mentioned that

Bildung and paideia are not synonymous terms as Bildung involves a more general educational process whilst paideia refers to the engagement in a specific cultural tradition (A. Miller). This is probably one of the reasons why this new genre adopted the term Bildung to refer to holistic personal growth.

Dilthey's conclusion about the rigid interrelatedness between the Bildungsroman and German literature remained solemnly undisputed until in 1974 Buckley suggested that the genre had flourished in English literature as well. Jerome Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Goldwin* (1974) postulated the pivotal differences between the German tradition of the genre and its affiliation with English literature. Buckley departs from the Diltheyan interpretation of the genre by giving a detailed account of the key elements of a Bildungsroman: "[C]hildhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love and the search for a vocation and a working philosophy-answer the requirements of the Bildungsroman" (18). This study was the doorway for novels such as *Great Expectations* (1861) and *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens to be considered as paradigms for the traditional genre as they fulfilled the criteria of encompassing most of the abovementioned Bildungsroman characteristics.

Apart from Dilthey's and Buckley's appraisal of the genre, there has been a large number of studies that examine the niche in detail. These studies introduce some of the subgenres of the Bildungsroman, for example, the Künstlerroman (artist novel) which reflects on the artist's journey towards an aesthetic maturity, the Entwicklungsroman (novel of development) which portrays the general developmental stages of the hero, and the Erziehungsroman (novel of education) which focuses on the educational maturity of the protagonist. It has also been suggested that the Bildungsroman, the Entwicklungsroman and the Erziehungsroman could be used interchangeably, and they were also regarded as synonymous terms by some scholars. However, Gutjahr has specified the differences between

the three types of novels as follows: "Im Entwicklungsroman ist also die Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges eines Protagonisten zentral, wobei in exemplarischer Weise private Lebensereignisse ohne Anspruch auf historische Wahrheit geschildert werden[9]" (12) and "[d]er Bildungsroman setzt also im Gegensatz zum Erziehungsroman gerade die Herausbildung *eigener* Ansichten und Weltvorstellungen ins Zentrum und betont das Recht auf einen individuellen Lebensentwurf auch *gegenüber* gesellschaftlichen Normvorgaben[10]" (13). It is clear that the Erziehungsroman is dependent on the notion of a target-oriented education within the respective pedagogy, for example Rousseau's *Emile*, and the Entwicklungsroman is a form of an individual's storytelling and evolution from any stage of life to another, illustrating the transitional phases of this development without necessarily arriving at adulthood. Much ink has been spilled trying to set the various sets of novels apart, but the purpose of my research is not to propose distinct limitations for each category. As explained in the introductory chapter, my analysis includes novels which can be classified in the Bildungsroman, Entwicklungsroman, and the Young Adult novel category. Whether the novel follows the character until maturity and literal adulthood is not within my scope. After all, what is important for the study is the growth of the character as the main principle of the intersex Bildungsroman.

With regard to the problematics of the Bildungsroman genre, some scholars have vigorously opposed the survival of the Bildungsroman genre after the nineteenth century and claim that its existence was merely a time-specific phenomenon tied to the sociopolitical factors of the 18th century: "There is no nineteenth-century Bildungsroman genre because no major writer after Goethe could envision a social context for Bildung" (J. Sammons 242).

[9] What is important in the Entwicklungsroman is the presentation of the developmental stage of the protagonist, where life events of the individual, without any historical claim, are portrayed in an exemplary manner (translation E.K.).

[10] In contrast to the Erziehungsroman, the Bildungsroman places the development of the individual's opinions and worldview at the center and emphasizes the right to a personal life design even if it contradicts the social norm requirements (translation E.K.).

Sammons argues that all the novels written after Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* have nothing in common with what Goethe had imagined as the Bildung of the individual which he described as "the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity" (41) and paralleled the Bildungsroman with a 'phantom genre'. Also, Jacobs points out the problematics of the Bildungsroman survival in the twentieth century because of the decline of the bourgeois individualism and the fading of the Bildung paradigm (278). On the other hand, there is an interesting remark by Steinecke about the shortcoming of the term 'Bildungsroman' due to our misunderstanding of the term Bildung as it was used in Goethe's time. Instead, he suggests the term 'Individualroman' (individual-novel) because "[t]he term has the advantage that it is not intellectually laden with interpretations from the past, and that it emphasizes the characteristic of this type of novel generally agreed to be determinant: the role of the individual" (94).

Bearing in mind the difficulties that the meaning and the application of the term has, it is needless to draw attention to the fact that the Bildungsroman genre has provoked and will provoke multiple interpretations. This 'semantic hypertrophy' of the Bildungsroman, as Moretti has described it, resonates with the tension the quintessential feature of the Bildungsroman bears: "[T]he conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization*" (The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture 15). In the following part, I will highlight the close association of the genre with the German literary tradition.

2.2 THE BILDUNGSROMAN AS A GERMAN TRADITION

The Bildungsroman marks, amongst others, an epitome of the consciousness of the German literary tradition. Dilthey did not only disseminate the term to a wider public, but he

also connected the terminology of the genre with German literature and consequently, due to the historical status quo, associating it with the underlying elements of the newly established German nation. As Kontje points out "the organic development of the hero toward maturation and social integration reproduces in miniature the movement of German literature towards its maturity, and this literature, in turn, is to inspire the unification of the German nation" (29). In as much as the idea of Bildung is the linking component of the genre and these ideas were mainly expressed by German intellectuals, what more would be needed than to render the Bildungsroman a German tradition? Martin Swales interprets the interrelatedness of the Bildungsroman with its German character as "[i]t is a novel form recognizably animated by the *Humanitätsideal* of late eighteenth-century Germany in that it is concerned with the whole person unfolding in all his complexity and elusiveness" (Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman 49). The idea that the Bildungsroman portrays the hero as "a man growing in national and historical time" (M. M. Bakhtin 25), points to the approach that *Wilhelm Meister* could serve as a paradigm of the new tradition and would set an example for the ideal Bildung. "Der Bildungsroman wurde [...] noch stärker als Ausdruck deutscher Eigenart gefasst [11] " (Gutjahr 18) and, thus, German cultural tradition was strengthened by this literary genre. The Bildungsroman was regarded as a unique opportunity to create a collective literary tradition that would symbolize the ideal of the German Bildung. Swales explains that the Bildungsroman was "the medium through which a characteristically German preoccupation can speak with greatest urgency to a wider European public" (The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse 160) communicating, thus, Germany to Europe.

In the process of canon formation in German literature, the Bildungsroman has earned its signature as the ultimate German genre. The reason behind this tight association between

[11] The Bildungsroman was more widely accepted as an expression of German nature (translation E.K.).

the genre and the German intellect is a combination of sociohistorical influences regarding Bildung and the development of the individual, for example Luther's Reformation, Pietism, and the establishment of the bourgeois society. However, the proliferation of the genre was still defended in Germany in the twentieth century as, for example, Thomas Mann wrote in 1916 that "[t]here is a type of novel that is, to be sure, German, typically German, legitimately national in character, and that is the highly autobiographical Bildungsroman and novel of development" (Jacobs and Krause 26). Of course, it is not suggested that the Bildungsroman is a national genre but the fact that the Bildungsroman exemplar *Wilhelm Meister* is German, signifies, at the very least, the important contribution that German literature has made to the genre.

2.2.1 Kultur der Innerlichkeit and Bildungsbürgertum

The emergence of a new aesthetic genre that reflected the principles and the demands of the new bourgeois class is to be understood under the sociohistorical circumstances taking place in the eighteenth century. The emergence of the so called *Bildungsbürgertum* – the educated middle-class – and its nationalist and liberal-constitutionalist nature laid the foundation for the focus of the Bildungstradition on the individual sphere. In contrast to the French and British systems of class, and due to the lack of a national unity in Germany, the Bildungsbürgertum assumed a very specific social and political role which amplified the German roots of the genre. As Vosskamp argues "[d]er Bildungsroman ist darin eine Allegorie des deutschen Bürgertums, als er die Doppelheit von selbstbestätigender Homogenisierung, und kritischer Selbstreflexion in seiner Geschichte zu verbinden vermag[12]" (141). The focus on Bildung becomes an integral part of the German national identity and, thus, Bildung becomes a middle-class value and point of perception.

[12] The Bildungsroman serves as an allegory of the German bourgeoisie as it is able to combine the duality of self-affirming homogenization and critical self-reflection in its history (Translation E.K.).

Additionally, Gutjahr contends that one of the reasons the Bildungsroman was so closely related to the German ethos was that it appeared at the same time with the shaping of a culture of inwardness.

The sociohistorical and economic circumstances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century redirected the attention from the outside to the inside as the production of a Kantian autonomous self was embraced. In the beginning, Bildung was considered as the ultimate goal regarding personal development, which until then, according to pietistic beliefs, had to be harmoniously modelled in the image of God after a systematic reading of the Scriptures and spiritual autobiographies. What later prevailed was a neo humanistic approach to Bildung which proclaimed that the individual himself was responsible for his self-realization because personal development eventually took place irrespective of any social framework. Luther's Reformation had already laid the foundation for the belief of a more self-reliant existence where the individual had to strive for his development mostly on his own. However, the Reformation myth was first questioned by Protestant Theologian Ernst Troeltsch in the first decade of the 20th century mainly with regard to the assumed causal connection between Lutheranism and modernity. He vehemently rejected this connection as he assumed that 18th century evangelical Pietism, as a conservative force, and Enlightenment, as a progressive force, joined over the course of the 18th century in forming modernity. It has also recently been questioned whether the predominantly Protestant Bürgertum and its insistent call upon the Reformation myth in Germany have influenced the Bildungstradition as much as it has been argued. Indeed, Luther-centric accounts of the Reformation that have depicted Luther as the interpreter of the German character have recently been called into question (Campi 18). From a Lutheran standpoint then, the radical pessimistic anthropology and its appeal on divine providence play only a minor role in the culture of individuation, upon which the Bildungsroman was mostly based, as it comes in

great contrast with the anthropological optimism of humanism. In the Bildungsroman the individual realizes that Church is no more the absolute epistemological authority, which according to recent research, drives the Bildungsroman tradition away from its, until recently, tight connection with the Reformation myth in Germany. However, according to Reid, the hero of the Bildungsroman does not abandon religion altogether, but he rather incorporates selective elements of Lutheranism into his personal philosophy that, in the end, enable him to deal with middle-class affairs (bürgerliche Verhältnisse) by retreating into himself (61).

As a result, individualism started playing an important role for further development and this was also portrayed in the genre as what became important was subjectivity and the individual experiences of an authentic self (J. A. Herdt). The journey of self-development depicted in the Bildungsroman ended with the social integration of the protagonist. However, it was a lonely journey into the world and into one's own personal beliefs at the same time: "[...] der Weg dorthin (zur Sozialisation des Helden) wird als höchst individueller, meist krisenhaft verlaufender Prozeß geschildert[13]" (Jacobs 28). This demanding path towards self-awareness that exposed all the character formation mechanisms was an individual process that the protagonist had to experience on his own.

Jeffers extends the idea of individuality by emphasizing the impact the Reformation and Schiller's notions on the aesthetics of the novel had on the cultivation of individuality. The result of this impact was that the cultivation of the individual was translated as a duty to realize an innate individuality (40). He points out that Luther envisaged an individual responsibility which Goethe pragmatized through the Bildungsroman. The Goethean idea of Bildung was "the ethical assertion of the individual's capacity to shape some part of his own life" (44). Jeffers also highlights the political state of affairs that determined the significance

[13] The way towards that (the protagonist's socialization) is described as a process that is highly individual and follows a mostly critical course (translation E.K.).

of individuality as "when German writers thought of the individual's self-cultivation, it was usually of its happening in relative isolation: his duty was to realize that portion of godhead that lay within him, with little emphasis on his fellow German claim's and a great deal of emphasis on non-German's otherness" (38). In view of the collapsing feudal system the individual found himself with some power over his life that was unfamiliar until then.

German writers were compelled to manifest the process of personal development that was an undiscovered territory: "Growing up became a problem when people's roles ceased to be 'feudally' prescribed and could to some extent be written by themselves" (51). As a result, the political allusion of the Bildungsroman is outlined in the emerging culture of individuality and the Bildungsbürgertum as, according to Jeffers, "the modern youth [...] is a self-expressive ego confronted with the community's demands for self-repression" (51). But not only the traditional Bildungsroman of the nineteenth century is tightly linked with individuality. Slaughter in *Human Rights, Inc.* has made the connection between the Bildungsroman, its overlaps with human rights, and the importance of individuality in the genre: "Both the *Bildungsroman* and human rights law recognize and construct the individual as a social creature and the process of individuation as an incorporative process of socialization, without which individualism itself would be meaningless" (19). Ultimately, the genre offers multiple ways of renegotiating concepts of individuality and identity construction.

Indisputably, a review of the German Bildungsroman tradition, even if this is a brief one for the sake of my study, could not be complete without reference to the emerging middle-class society and its impact on the formation of the concept of Bildung in Germany. The Bildungsbürgertum enabled the utilitarian function of Bildung as the educated class would also be responsible for disseminating socio-political ideas "assuming that whatever is good for the individual must also be good for the state" (Cocalis 406). The right to create

one's own fate stimulated the individual personal development and contributed to the harmony between reality and the ideal. Jacobs reveals the change in the Weltanschauung in the following: "Nicht Tradition und Zufall der Geburt, nicht die Gnade der Obrigkeit sollen die gesellschaftliche Rolle der Einzelnen bestimmen, sondern er selbst mit seinen Talenten und seinen Leistungen, die er in freiem Zusammenspiel mit gleichberechtigten anderen entfaltet[14]" (274). The emancipation movement provided the newly educated middle class with the ability to prevail over one's destiny and also stripped the nobility from the exclusive right to Bildung. Bildung was primarily associated with the bourgeoisie for the reason that, according to Sammons, "Bildung is intensely bourgeois" as "it carries with it many assumptions about the autonomy and relative integrity of the self, its potential self-creative energies, its relative range of options within the material, social, even psychological determinants" (The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification 42). The Bildungsroman tradition gained currency also because it offered a possibility beyond the deterministic relationship between Bildung and the social surrounding of nurture and drew attention towards the modernistic individual experience. As a result, it is no surprise that the growing interest in the acquisition of Bildung and the willingness to belong to the educated middle class as a cultural phenomenon in Germany was compared to the French Revolution: "So lange die Welt stehet, sind keine Erscheinungen so merkwürdig gewesen als in Deutschland die Romanleserey, und in Frankreich die Revolution. Diese zwey Extreme sind ziemlich zugleich miteinander großgewachsen [15]" (Wittmann 309).

Further, the emergence of the Bildungsroman coincided with the emergence of the novel in Europe and consequently there was a correlation between the task of the novel and

[14] "The social role of the individual is not determined by tradition and coincidence of birth, neither by the grace of authority but by the individual himself with his talents and accomplishments which he develops freely with his equals" (Translation E.K.).
[15] "As long as the world exists, nothing has been so remarkable as the reading of novels in Germany and the revolution in France. These two extremes grew up together pretty much at the same time" (Translation E.K.).

the Bildungsroman, which for many was regarded as the ultimate 'Roman' (novel). The everlasting conflict between poetry and prose, or according to Hegel between 'der Poesie des Herzen und der entgegenstehenden Prosa der Verhältnisse[16]" (393), which was recognizable within a novel, was harmoniously resolved in the Bildungsroman. The growing number of readerships that was sustained by the new and influential bourgeoisie urged many Germans to view Bildung, and consequently the Bildungsroman, as a vehicle for a fundamental change in the socio-political scene. Steinecke implies that when Hegel was describing the characteristics of the novel, of a mixture of the real and the ideal, he was quietly describing *Wilhelm Meister* whose personal development was an unmistakable portrayal of Bildung (78-79). As a result, *Wilhelm Meister* was acknowledged as the ultimate Bildungsroman, which was, in turn, read as a social novel because it focused on social Bildung and on the individual.

In the end, one has to admit that there is no exact English translation of the word *Bildung* and, thus, using the term 'novel of formation' interchangeably with the *Bildungsroman* implies that certain limitations of the essence of the term have been transcended. For this reason, I mainly use the term 'Bildungsroman' in my research, accepting, at the same time, contemporary interpretations of Bildung that incorporate individual and societal implications in its concept.

2.3 THE FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN

What all the above-mentioned scholarly remarks on the genre have in common, is that they examine the Bildungsroman under an indisputably male-centered scope. The protagonist is always a male individual and at the core of the genre is his self-growth and realization of the world through his engendered scope. Male and female development were two concepts entirely diverse and, in fact, female development was left in obscurity in the eighteenth and

[16] "the poetry of the heart and the opposing prose of existing conditions" (Translation Steinecke H.).

nineteenth century: “The education of women takes place imperceptibly, as if through the atmosphere of representational thought, more through living than through the acquisition of knowledge, whereas man attains his position only through the attainment of thought and numerous technical exertions” (G. Hegel 207). Since formal education was inaccessible for women, Hegel notes that the way women acquired education and, in that way, developed their individual being, was through understanding the world on their own and assimilating knowledge by experience.

The Bildungsroman genre has been regarded as an eighteenth and nineteenth century phenomenon and it has often been criticized for its androcentrism (Abao 4), because since its first appearance in the eighteenth century, until the 1970s, the sole concern of the novel had been the male protagonist’s sufferings, conflicts, and teleological success or failure. Even later studies of the Bildungsroman genre associate it strongly with the male experience: “the very elements that characterize the *Bildungsroman* as a form: wide cultural formation, professional mobility, full social freedom—for a long time, the west European middle-class man held a virtual monopoly on these, which made him a sort of structural *sine qua non* of the genre” (Moretti, The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture ix). In the early forms of the genre, where the values of the bourgeois society were reflected, only male protagonists were represented, considering that before the twentieth century they were the ones to have access to education, occupation, and to be entitled to a meaningful participation in the public sphere. It was a man’s obligation to self-reflect and deal with his individual education whereas women were obliged to participate in the moral/ethic character building of the children. These socioeconomic circumstances were reflected in the Bildungsroman excluding any non-male protagonist representation from the genre leading towards “defend[ing] as normative the single path of middle-class, male development [... and] establish[ing] a canon of overwhelmingly male-authored and male-centered texts” (Fraiman

10). Women in Bildungsromane either supported or questioned the male protagonist's decisions or choices reinforcing "the *Bildungsheld's* tendency to recruit women to perform complex instrumental functions in the course of pursuing his development" (Castle 163). Their characters served as support towards the personal cultivation of the male protagonist and leveled their contribution down to a supplementary one. Bildungsroman authors avoided to embrace notions of gender equality in their novels resulting into the dominance of the male hero in mostly all the narratives of the past. This tactic did not solely affect the Bildungsroman, but it reflected a world of male hegemony that, until the twentieth century, had created a canon consisting mainly of male narrative voices. Certainly, this is a reason why many critics do not support that the Bildungsroman can appear as a narration of female quest insisting that "women are accessories for the male's heroic adventures" (Heller 2). The classic Bildungsroman perpetuated presumptions of male superiority although some voices that attempted to close the gap between the male and female counterparts had been heard before the emergence of the genre.

In the 1970s a new wave of awakening, mainly feminist criticism, that raised awareness of women's position in society, put the genre of the Coming-of-age[17] novel again under the spotlight and led to the characterization of the genre as "the most salient form for literature influenced by neo-feminism" (Morgan 185). In the 1970s the social setting made gender and sexual differences a topic broader to the public interest and more easily discussable. It took the emergence of feminist theory and its critique of biological determinism to reevaluate the fixed gender roles fundamentally. As feminism questioned the predetermined societal forms imposed by the male world, feminist critics analyzed nineteenth and twentieth century novels that depicted "the suppression and defeat of female autonomy, creativity, and maturity by

[17] In his preface, Buckley admits that he hesitates to use the term Bildungsroman to describe English novels and welcomes other terms such as novel of youth, novel of education, of apprenticeship, of adolescence and others (Buckley vii).

patriarchal gender norms" (Lazzaro-Weiss 17). Feminists concluded that the scientific construction of the women's role and its predestination was a highly political act, and their aspiration was a society without gender hierarchy. They distanced themselves from the essentialist view of female inferiority and fought for gender equality and female autonomy. Simone de Beauvoir was amongst the first to contribute to the raising of a female consciousness in the twentieth century and to the development of feminist philosophy and gender theory. She highlighted gender inequality by asserting that the two sexes have never shared the world in equal ways and was a pioneer in challenging sexual stereotypes and defining female identity (The Second Sex). Beyond question, however, the starting point in feminist literature was expressed through the first wave of feminism writers. First wave feminist writers and suffragette manifestos pointed the attention towards creating a powerful image of female autonomy rebelling against patriarchal hegemony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The critical analysis conducted by feminist critics not only revealed the subgenre of the female Bildungsroman and subverted its typical form, but also incited the re-reading of the traditional genre of the Georgian and Victorian periods through a female lens leading to the flourishing of the genre in English literature. The form of the Bildungsroman provided writers and critics with an opportunity to reconsider deep established stereotypes and formulate a framework where they could free themselves from patriarchal bonds of oppression: "[T]he form was used to defend the right of feminist and women authors to describe their own reality and to legitimize these experiences and their differences to those of men" (Lazzaro-Weiss 21). By reexamining not only the traditional Bildungsromane but also the accompanying literature, feminists drew the attention away from the male Bildungsroman for the first time. For many feminists, the Bildungsroman genre was used as a fit vehicle for expression of political messages of resistance in a male-dominated world.

It is not suggested that, prior to the first and second wave of feminist movement of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, novels of female development were non-existent. During the French Enlightenment female authorship was gaining presence and, according to O'Neal, female writers were prepared to "subvert novelistic conventions" (126). Mme de Grafigny's *Lettres d'une Peruvienne* (1747) is considered a sensationist novel with a "texture of a Bildungsroman [that] trace[s] the maturation of a character from an attachment to the senses to a higher level of understanding" (O'Neal 136). The novel depicted the development of a female character and it certainly contributed to the insight into female approaches to personal change but, it did not represent the values of Bildung per se as it was regarded at that time and by no means, did these novels of female development play a significant part in the shaping of the traditional genre. The particularity of the female Bildungsroman of the eighteenth century may be found in the task that it fulfilled. Bannet states that "it was designed to effect the *Bildung* of its readers and thus to effect changes in the manners and morals of the times" (196). Along with conduct books and sermons, which hoped to mandate female behavior, the female Bildungsroman aspired to influence female nature and practices. Hence, it served as a means for social change and not social action as later female Bildungsromane in the nineteenth century did.

The female hero's journey was at the heart of Charlotte Brontë's classic, *Jane Eyre* (1847), and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) which are generally regarded as the first female Bildungsromane. But, most commonly, the depiction of the female character in those novels did not illustrate a formative fragmentation similar to the male Bildungsroman as either the heroine accepted her role as a submissive wife and mother (*Jane Eyre*), or was confronted with a mental dead-end of madness (*The Bell Jar*), or she saw no other option but suicide (*The Awakening*). Most often death symbolized a catharsis in the novels of female development that served as castigation or rebellion against social constraints. But again,

many critics claim that eighteenth and nineteenth century heroines of novels of female development fail to achieve Bildung as a result of their sociohistorical context: "The inequality that female protagonists experience in terms of social options, such as access to the public space of formal learning and employment, or in terms of the development of independent agency (hindered by marital and maternal roles) is seen as a crucial factor that prevents the heroines from achieving full maturity" (Šnircová 16). Other critics also claim the Bildungsroman genre is "inaccessible to women's writing" (Gjurgjan 109) since its bond with patriarchal culture and male authority is so strong. Consequently, there are scholars who regard the female Bildungsroman as an immature classification of the traditional genre, which fails to bear resemblance to the generic form of the novel.

Not reading the novels through the feministic spectrum only highlights the fact that the process of character formation, as Fraiman has argued, "never leads the heroine to mastery but only to a lifetime as perennial novice" (6) and what the heroine has tried is "to see the world while avoiding violation by the world's gaze" (7). Womanhood has been portrayed in accordance with the existing social norms and "in most of the novels of development it seems clear that the authors conceive of growing up female as a choice between auxiliary or secondary personhood, sacrificial victimization, madness, and death" (A. Pratt 36). Undoubtedly, stories of female development raise issues of the finiteness of options that are available for women and at the same time attempt to question this same finiteness in promoting a model of female development and coming into womanhood radically different to what was considered proper female behavior until then.

Affinities, albeit not many, between the male and the female Bildungsroman include the clash with parental authority and the hero's/heroine's decision between a viable present in a matrix of societal duties refusing to adjust to the proscribed obligations heading towards an unknown future. Ellis presupposes a group of generic characteristics that both the female and

the male Bildungsroman are based on: "1) the protagonist's agency, which shows that he or she is actively involved in his or her own development, 2) self-reflection, which shows the protagonist's ability to learn and grow from his or her experiences, and 3) the protagonist's eventual reintegration with society, which demonstrates the fundamentally conservative nature of the genre" (11). The female Bildungsroman manages to maintain salient characteristics that differentiate the genre vastly from its male counterpart. It focuses on "the crisis occasioned by a woman's awakening, in her late twenties or late thirties, to the stultification and fragmentation of a personality devoted not to self-fulfillment and awareness, but to a culturally determined, self-sacrificing, and self-effacing existence" (Hoover Braendlin 18). The heroine is caught between the realization of a life that is not defined by her own will, conforming to traditional female gender roles of wifeliness and motherhood. This consciousness appears to have an awakening effect on the heroine's soul that activate her self-knowledge and autonomy, offering, overall, a critique of male hegemony.

In 1983, Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland published a provocative collection of essays on the novel of female development called *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Their work was among the first to step into the chasm of the female representation in the Bildungsroman genre, because Buckley's *Season of Youth* had rendered merely the male protagonist as a regulatory postulate neglecting a female representation in them. They noticed that the existing literature on the Bildungsroman focused on male protagonists exclusively, and also recognized that Buckley's stages of identity development had no valid application for females. Based on the latest feminist psychoanalytic theorists, Abel et al claimed that the developmental stages and goals of female characters are different from those presented in the male Bildungsroman. They suggested that the female Bildungsroman follows two forms: it either adopts a chronological sequence of

development of the heroine from childhood to adulthood, following the male paradigm of the Bildungsroman and provides some closure to the heroine's apprenticeship, or it builds on unconventional time framing where the protagonist firstly fulfils the fairy-tale expectation of marriage and maternity and then experiences moments of awakening in brief epiphanic moments. Novels of female development, thus, fall into these two categories and female expression finds, for once, its generic literary tradition.

In most of the female Bildungsromane the heroine realizes the disparity between two lives: life as a human being, where self-discovery and self-knowledge are fostered, and life as a woman, where the self is only defined through marriage and motherhood. The process of this dark realization is laid out in the novel of awakening, whose title deceitfully implies the awakening of the heroine to a pattern of life that balances the inner with the outer world. However, Susan Rosowski argues that "the protagonist's growth results . . . with a realization that for a woman such an art of living is difficult or impossible: it is an awakening to limitations" (49). The protagonist is made conscious of the incongruity between the inner and outer world, a dead-end she cannot break away from, and is awakened by this dissonance. The choice she must make happens at the expense of one of the two ways of life. She will either sacrifice her emerging sense of self, or she will identify with the role society has imposed on her. Either way, one substantial part of her nature will be immolated.

The female Bildungsroman has for many years been seen as a product of sociohistorical circumstances and can be divided in two contexts: "[T]he context of modernity that associated the progress of society with the personal development of middle-class man and the context of second wave feminism that opened the possibility for the successful development of women" (Šnircová 23). But since the late twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century have brought in surface post-feminism, there seems the need to develop a third context for the female Bildungsroman. Consequently, the process of the female

Bildungsroman transformation seems to follow the development of female writing as Showalter has indicated:

> First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is a phase of protest against these standards and values, and advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. (13)

Showalter's representation of the three phases of female writing can be adopted to illustrate the trajectory of the female Bildungsroman analogically. The first phase referring to novels of female development written until the nineteenth century where the social role of females was scrutinized. The second phase, which coincides with the feminist movement, focuses its attention to women's rights, gender equality, and autonomy of female thought. Finally, the third phase of the female Bildungsroman disengages from feminist thought but nears post-feminism which "is variously identified or associated with an antifeminist backlash, pro-feminist third wave, Girl Power dismissive of feminist politics, trendy me-first power feminism and academic postmodern feminism" (Genz and Brabon 10).

2.4 THE 'HERE AND NOW' OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN: TRANSGRESSION OF LIMITS

Jameson contends that literary genres are "experimental constructs" (145) which bend their edges to reconcile prevailing progressions. *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* has undoubtedly been the Bildungsroman paradigm that provided literary tradition with the basic pattern of the genre's characteristics. However, at the same time, it has been essential in expressions of variations of the novel that allow contemporary voices to be heard and, despite being altered,

each interpretation merely hints to the genre's own versatility and the non-linear trajectory of the form. Given the previous reflection on the origins of the Bildungsroman in German literature it is evident that it emerged in the late eighteenth century, peaked with the works of Goethe, flourished with the works of Victorian realists followed by a period of overlooked attention in nineteenth century and climaxed again during the Wilhelmian canonization process in the late nineteenth century. Alongside thrived the genre in European literature as well, especially in Britain with the Victorian realists and postwar modernism provoked the fundamentals of the traditional niche putting the finger on "the intimate connection between personal and historical change" (Boes 242) in the modern Bildungsroman in order to associate it with notions of assimilation and acculturation. And while Moretti notices that a genre "exhausts its potentialities" and "loses its form under the impact of reality" (Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History 17), Castle claims that these transformations of the generic boundaries reinforce its durability and adaptability through time and give the Bildungsroman "a new sense of purpose" (6). He concludes that even though the modernist Bildungsroman does not entirely conform to the traditional patterns of the genre, it defends its primary goal which is the hero's Bildung within a critical point of view towards social structures: "For this recuperative project seeks not to circumvent or 'opt out' of socialization processes, but rather to develop new conceptions of self-cultivation, which often take the form of a liberatory *depersonalization* and which respond more effectively and productively to the demands of modern social conditions" (28). Thus, for Castle, the Bildungsroman evolves perpetually to take the shape of a Bildung that is not fixed and is not bound to fixed interpretations. It is useful to examine this reconceptualization of the genre as it is within this context that the subgenre of the intersex Bildungsroman challenges and at the same time reinforces different versions of a postmodern Bildung.

In the twentieth century Bildungsroman the sociohistorical circumstances were reevaluated, and the attention was turned towards issues of post structural modernity which included minority and colonial studies. The growing complexities of postcolonial and minority studies in the second half of the twentieth century were reflected in the Bildungsroman studies. Expansions of the genre have, thus, been suggested because of the cultural transformations that have occurred in the meantime. For example, the Black British Bildungsroman, according to Stein, "has a dual function: it is about the formation of its protagonist as well as the transformation of British society and cultural institutions" (Stein 22). Moreover, the transformation of the genre is also evident in the female Bildungsroman as postfeminist studies have wavered the representations of femininity which are depicted in two ways and influenced by the turn-of-the-millennium mass media: "a 'happy housewife' image - which offers a straightforward return to a patriarchal tradition, strongly criticized by feminist critics - and the more complex images of 'Girl Power' which have provoked ambivalent responses from feminist critics" (Šnircová 21). It, therefore, comes as no surprise the fact that Slaughter suggests that the Bildungsroman is concerned with the articulation of human rights because it constitutes "the liberal public sphere's most favored novelistic form for plotting human personality development and the acquisition of human dignity as the normative story of modern socialization" (Slaughter 145). Minorities, in their struggle to gain their rights, adopt the Bildungsroman genre as a missionary to articulate their marginalized processes of becoming and so there are examples of the Chicano, the African American, the Caribbean, the Asian American and other forms of the Bildungsroman. Hence, the rise of feminist, colonial and minority studies heralded the "resurgence of interest in the form [of the Bildungsroman], especially by marginalized subjects" (Bolaki 10-11), such as intersex persons, who have embraced the Bildungsroman genre as an opportunity for a narrative discourse about intersexuality.

Interestingly, another product of postmodernism has been the depiction of childhood and adolescence in literature marking the power relations created between the young individual and society. This depiction has been, since then, clearly manifested in Young Adult novels which emerged during the 1960s and set forth the focalization on the culture of the youth. Tellingly, the main distinction between Bildungsromane and Young Adult novels is that the Young Adult novel focuses on the development of the character before he/she reaches adulthood. Nevertheless, the origin of this type of novel is undeniably the Entwicklungsroman which is a part of the general Bildungsroman tradition. What becomes quite striking is that the interrelatedness of the novels with adolescent representations often obscures the distinction between Bildungsromane, Entwicklungsromane and Young Adult fiction. Indeed, I adopt and step on Trites Seelinger's conclusion that "Young Adult novels are *Entwicklungsromane* or *Bildungsromane* that self-consciously explore the individual's power in relation to the institutions that comprise her or his existence. Thus, YA novels may or may not be *Bildungsromane*, depending more on the level of maturity the protagonist reaches than anything else" (18). As a result, postmodernism has introduced many types of novels of development broadening their spectrum and enabling the emergence of the intersex Bildungsroman as a project of postmodernity.

Postmodernism and the politics of sexual difference in the 1970s and 1980s opened up new possibilities for the coming out of minority voices of the dominant culture as stated earlier. Same-sex subjectivity and same-sex love were expressed in literary texts, and many considered the traditional genre of the Bildungsroman as the most suitable form for the narration of their development. Many scholars analyzed Bildungsromane through the lens of homoerotic love as the validity of hegemonical modes of power and thinking were questioned and being gay or lesbian was seen more as a matter of pride than of pathology (Spargo 28). Traditional stereotypes of men and women were unsettled, and lesbian and gay authors

presented an alternative way of subjecthood and identity development through literature. Since the nineteen eighties many gay and lesbian Bildungsromane have been written to present lives that imply the historical framework of the male and female type of the genre has been reevaluated and that the crossing of genders can be showcased in postmodern queer literature. Thus, new versions of the Bildungsroman challenged fixed understandings valid within an essentialist context (Bolaki 18) and during the late twentieth century texts like Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) and Edmund White's *A Boy's Own Story* (1982), to only name a few, enjoyed great popularity and marked the beginning of the exploration of lesbian and gay identity. In similar narratives, stories of growth, exploration, and identity formation are discussed, and different kinds of subjects are generated by "the notion of a gay child [that] spotlights the drama of children's darkness" (Stockton Bond 6). Queer sexual subjectivity is generally displayed in gay and lesbian literary studies, but this will not be within the scope of my work.

One of the first to use the term queer theory was Teresa de Lauretis in 1991 in order to question the deep established notions of normality and of the constitution of dominant knowledge. Other scholars, such as Spargo, have associated the roots of queer theory with Foucault's understanding of the discursive construction of sexualities (26). Ultimately, anyone and anything that deviated from the norm was to be considered queer and as a result female sexuality and gay liberation were closely related to queer theory. One of the major concerns of queer theory was to "articulate the terms in which lesbian gay sexualities may be understood and imaged as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization counteracting dominant discourses with other constructions of the subject in culture" (De Lauretis iv). Postmodern queer literature used the old literary genre of the Bildungsroman in order to recontextualize the different forms of identity that were different from the past. And as Miller claims that the queer Bildungsroman stems from women's romance novels which first

articulated the female's desire for a sexual subjectivity within or without the social world (241), there seems to be a reassertion of Barth, who in his essay *The Literature of Exhaustion*, pointed out that the 'exhaustion' of the genre often led to its reuse as a playful potential of the depiction of the crisis of human identity (1984). In doing so, the traditional Bildungsroman was reconceptualized and often signified an expansion of the genre where the articulation of a coherent subjecthood, mostly a queer one, was under development in a postmodern society.

Two major concepts of the traditional Bildungsroman are the individual and society and how they are entwined and mirrored in and with each other. Modernity, however, brought to light changes that displaced these concepts and forced them to adjust to new practices. Political, social, and economical shifts provided the Bildungsroman niche with an opportunity to find a new place in "which writers and critics alike can understand the world around them" (Boes 242) in an attempt to push its thematic boundaries. Bolaki talks about the "hybrid space of the Bildungsroman" and reasserts the genre's generic fluidity and versatility in espousing alternative subjectivities and in unsettling "different manifestations of 'normality'" (13). And though for the classic European Bildungsroman "gendersex is not fully a component of social struggle" (M. Miller 239) for the contemporary Bildungsroman non-normative development has become the rule. Although the logic behind the Bildungsroman has been to represent normative development, the way from youth to adulthood is nowadays no longer a linear progression and failure to achieve a stative adulthood is not dooming as Halberstam has suggested: "[F]ailure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods" (3). Consequently, the queer Bildungsroman or Literature for the Young Adult (YAL) with queer protagonists, as it is more popularly known, appeared, marking a signal of the break-up of the heteronormative representation of adolescence in fiction.

Many scholars sense that the Bildungsroman of the twenty-first century serves as a commentary on postmodern society and the effect of fractured identities. Jones suggests that the genre "is emerging, transmuting the subject formation of the genre into the actual formation of subjects in the world" (447). Comparably, Heckman emphasizes the importance of cultural and historical settings on the expression of the coherent self by introducing the 'posthuman Bildungsroman' where "[t]he story remains a tale of growth and education, but the end of this process is an attempt to stabilize the subject and construct a coherent representation of the self that is consistent with the expectations of its cultural milieu" (Heckman). What all the aforementioned interpretations have in common is that they use the Bildungsroman as a heuristic device that demonstrates how identities can be shaped not following normative development. Individuality is located within narratives of postmodernity which makes space for the proliferation of identities and thereby the postmodern Bildungsroman manages to be both the product and the mirror of society; exactly what Moretti originally thought was the outcome of the modern Bildungsroman (The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture). Hence, it is no wonder that many scholars believe that the genre "reveals a remarkable development and continuity" that consist of the "thematic perspective of individual growth, upbringing and formation of personality of a human subject, the continuous interest in this aspect of existence to be treated as a literary subject matter, as well as the openness of the Bildungsroman to originality on both thematic and narrative levels" (Golban, A History of the Bildungsroman: From Ancient Beginnings to Romanticism 4-5). However, the aim remains the same in the genre no matter how many readings one adds: Bildung and the shaping of the self within society.

The novels that are analyzed in my research strikingly show how contemporary young adult intersex novels work within the scope of the Bildungsroman but at the same time transgress the limits of the genre. Undoubtfully the coming of age stories of my research

depart from the conventions of the traditional Bildungsroman and some of them are only read through the scope of popular young adult literature. However, my analysis of the novels unfolds, even in the much undervalued 'low' literature of young adult novels, the relationship that is cultivated between the intersex adolescent and society reminiscing the core value of the traditional Bildungsroman.

2.5 GROWING UP INTERSEX AND THE INTERSEX BILDUNGSROMAN

Although scholarship about intersex depictions in the genre of the Bildungsroman is limited and at the same time there is a scarcity of literary works with intersex characters, reading the selected texts through the lens of the Bildungsroman is by all means intentional. Embracing Bolaki's affirmation about the role the genre could play nowadays and its ability to bring together literary criticism and politics, makes it possible to understand the malleability of the genre: "The genre […] becomes a site where humanistic literary approaches and more theoretically inclined paradigms can be intertwined and where aesthetics and politics can work together" (20). When Lazzaro-Weiss proposed a theoretical framework for the female Bildungsroman, she highlighted the most paradoxical element of the genre: "The form itself is based on an unresolved dialectic between its intent to represent experience and its negative critique of social and political structure" (26). The dialectic of this conflict between narrative subjectivity and ideological discourse offers, in part, some explanation of why the genre remains apropos until today and why it can depict the Other, which in the case of the intersex Bildungsroman is the marginalized identity. That is, because the narrative subjects change in the same way society changes in order to explore the sociocultural issues at work. Afterall, there seems to be an underlying, fundamental continuity in thinking from enlightened modernity to postmodernism and beyond. The unattainability of Bildung from an in-the-image-of-God perfection to a more humanistic approach which is more flexible and resilient

in the concept of modernity is evident in the evolution of the genre as well. Most importantly, the concept of Bildung is central in the Bildungsroman despite the difference in times: "Everything revolves around an image of the human world not as a compact mesh of relations and modifications between qualities but as a living world, an environment in which what exists is recognizable as continual change, continual formation without definitive results and without achievable certainties" (Giacomoni 56). As a matter of fact, my analysis of the literary texts achieves exactly this: The projection of the universality of Bildung and the transition from a naturalistic individual identity to a more fragmented postmodern identity development of the 6 protagonists. Wayne, Jamie, Max, Alex, Sophie, and Cal follow a common trajectory in order to trace their fragmented selves while at the same time their subjectivity collides with overarching cultural and political norms. Besides, feminism, modernist, and postmodernist studies have played a decisive role in shifting the traditional Bildungsroman tradition towards non-hegemonical identities represented in post-colonial and minority novels of formation enabling writers to welcome the Bildungsroman as a means for the articulation of diverse subjectivities and identities (Hoover Braendlin 75). The intersex Bildungsroman seems to find its place under the umbrella of gender and/or minority studies where non-normative protagonists explore selfhood and where the struggles between internal and external forces shape the Bildung of the intersex Bildungshero.

What this study addresses is the exploration of the Bildungsroman framework where Bildung is redirected towards the agency of an intersex protagonist. The renewed understanding of the genre considers and adheres to societal changes of the past decades in the Anglophone world, where there is a high demand for expression of a space in-between the two genders which appeared in the form of the queer Bildungsroman. If, as Dilthey contended, "the Bildungsroman is closely associated with the new developmental psychology" (336) because its intention was to mirror the individual's self-reflective findings,

then, I argue that, the emerging intersex Bildungsroman is linked to gender theories and genetics in order to include non-normative experiences of self-development. The intersex Bildungsroman depicts the identity development processes of people whose sex does not comply with culture's dominant bigenderism. It allows for postgender explorations about what constitutes 'normal' and 'non-normal' identity. This has been neatly summed up by Moretti who contends that "the *Bildungsroman* attempts to *build* the Ego and make it indisputable center of its own structure" (The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture 560). I will show how the intersex ego is built within the narrative and how it is transformed towards its socialization, and how the intersex Bildungsroman defies the normality of the traditional Bildungsroman.

By drawing parallels between the birth of the female Bildungsroman when "newly politicized women turned their sharpened awareness to themselves and to a culture they perceived hostile" (Frieden 306), and the birth of the intersex Bildungsroman through which light is shed into to workings of the intersex identity, it can be assumed that both subgenres have something in common: they both emerged because of a narrative void. There was no space for the representation of a coherent self, neither for a woman in the nineteenth century, nor for an intersex individual in the twenty-first century. As far as the emergence of the intersex Bildungsroman is concerned, its roots lie, first, in the need to deflect the obscurity that conceals the intersex into more comprehensible terms, and second, in the compulsive desire of the intersex to be heard and seen. In other words, the intersex Bildungsroman was born in order to satisfy the need to rebel against the unjust and arbitrary construction of intersexuality.

Anchoring on Boyd's notions about the intelligibility of normative bodies and their retainment of their rights, non-normative bodies are, by inference, deprived of their rights: "bodies that inhabit or enact naturalized states of being remain culturally intelligible, socially

valuable, and as a result, gain and retain the privilege of citizenship and its associated right and protections" (135). Although the Bildungsroman genre is traditionally individualistic, here it underscores the pluralistic values of a group of people who are overseen or 'normalized' by society. Thus, Slaughter's suggestion of the deep-rooted link between the Bildungsroman and human rights is realized through the emergence of the intersex Bildungsroman because it alludes to claims of sexual citizenship and more specifically intersex citizenship. What is more, postcolonial gender theory specificities are reaffirmed through the intersex Bildungsroman since a heterogenous Self is voiced and normative power claims are challenged.

Tellingly, the intersex Bildungsroman is a narrative form that mirrors the postgender approach of intersex identity and a society where intersex selfhood is possible and independent of the medical management strategies. While it realizes Bakhtin's suggestion that "in it man's individual's emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence" (23) the affinity between the coming-of-age of the individual and the development of society is evident in the intersex Bildungsroman as it resonates political struggles for the right of self-determination. The protagonist of the intersex Bildungsroman "is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. The transition is accomplished in him and through him [...]. It is as though the very foundations of the world are changing, and man must change along with them" (M. M. Bakhtin 23-24). In this sense it could be argued that the intersex Bildungsroman encompasses elements of individual and social development because both are necessary for the retreat from a modality of acculturation for the intersex. Redfield argues that "the Bildungsroman narrates the acculturation of a self - the integration of a particular 'I' into the general subjectivity of a community, and thus, finally into the universal subjectivity of humanity" (38). In this sense,

intersex intelligibility emerges in the Bildungsroman as a hybrid imagination, a postgender existence that surfaces in the twenty-first century.

There have been numerous autobiographical accounts of intersex narratives written by intersex people who wanted to awaken society or turn society into a blunt witness of intersex unintelligibility. The intention of those narratives was to challenge cultural stereotypes and redefine issues of gender identity based on the axiom that "[w]riters are setting out a hope that others will also reaffirm, or challenge cultural norms based on sex" (Blaha 49). They can also be considered as narrations which disclose the process of coming into consciousness and raise a collective awareness of intersexuality. The space in-between is succinctly outlined and at the same time the intersex personality is unfolded and made intelligible.

One of the priorities of the first-person narratives written by intersex individuals was to put an end to the medical violence of the 'normalization' of the intersex body via genital surgeries and hormone medication. Until the 1990s, when intersex people started popularizing their accounts, doctors considered the medical management of ambiguous genitals at birth a sine qua non and at the same time, medical practitioners were the only authentic voices that documented the intersex narratives. Intersex voices were silenced, and society perpetuated the model of specific gender assignment at birth. Intersex infants were surgically defined as boys or girls and were raised accordingly, without ever being asked for their consent. Through their personal narrations, however, intersex people managed to declare their existence, reveal the pathogeny of the medical appropriation of the intersex body, and to reclaim part of their lost self: "The personal narrating of selves and experiences provides the intersex individual with a sense of mastery over their life . . . and enables them to come to terms with their often traumatic bodily experiences" (Amato 57). In these memoirs, the intersex reality becomes widely known and intersex people have the power to reformulate their own truth.

After the emergence of the intersex autobiographical accounts, a new wave of literary third-sex or non-binary gender expression appeared in fiction as well. Novelists not only benefitted from those accounts, as these accounts provided insight into the intersex identity development, but also enriched their thematic by addressing issues of character development following the generic features of the Bildungsroman. They popularized stories about intersex people and have, since then, contributed to the reexamination of the intersex space. Apart from the fictional features that are peppered in the narrative, the difference between the autobiographical accounts and the intersex Bildungsroman, is that the latter goes beyond the themes of medical violence and silencing of the intersex body. In the intersex Bildungsroman, the medicalization of the intersex body is included in the narration, but identity development and the hero's journey towards self-consciousness and self-realization comprise part of the storyline as well.

The novels that fit into the intersex Bildungsroman category and are discussed here are *Annabel* by Kathleen Winter, *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* by Lianne Simon, *Golden Boy* by Abigail Tarttelin, *Alex as Well* by Alyssa Brugman, *In Between* by Jane Hoppen, and *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Not only do these novels shed light into the lives of intersex people that are restricted to the roles society has prescribed to them, but they also offer a critique of bigender hierarchy tracing a new dialectic of Bildung. They all describe the journey of their heroes who start from being unaware of their intersex identity, struggle with themselves / their parents / their surroundings for an acceptable place of becoming, and, finally, either conform to, or resist societal boundaries of sex and gender binarism. The selected texts adhere to patterns of the traditional Bildungsroman, but at the same time reformulate it in order to inculcate new dimensions of how an intersex identity can become intelligible.

Do the novels discussed alone in this study comprise a new genre? Mostly not. But they surely mark an ongoing shift towards criticizing solidly formed social structures of gender perception and towards diversions from the classical Bildungsroman, which, as discussed by Lazzaro-Weiss, "includes a tendency to make people feel at home with their prejudices and less likely to change" (24). On the contrary, the intersex Bildungsroman challenges engendered misconceptions and defies stereotypical notions of sexuality. The change prompted by the intersex Bildungsroman derives from questioning the misconceptions of growing up intersex while simultaneously introducing new possibilities. The novels of my study show an interrelation between intersex studies and the Bildungsroman genre and make possible a more relevant reading regarding the representation of intersex youth and their identity construction. Interpreting Jameson's supposition that "genre theory must always in one way or another project a model of the coexistence or tension between several generic modes or strands" (141), it can be assumed that the intersex Bildungsroman escalates the tension between the male and the female generic form and reformulates the hero's development in a dialogic mode. These novels are Bildungsromane not only because they depict the heroes during their adolescent formative years, but mainly because they challenge the social order and demand the 'severing of all previous ties with the idyllic' (M. Bakhtin 234). The Bildungsroman is well-suited for an exploration of identity because it bends stereotypical notions of gender and identity formation. The intersex Bildungsroman could doubtlessly not exist without its male and female precursors but can by no means be considered identical in design to them.

Additionally, some of the novels discussed in this study have received strong criticism by members of the international intersex society regarding misrepresentations and ambiguities about the intersex body e.g., Wayne in *Annabel* becomes impregnated by his own body, which is scientifically impossible when being intersex. Bearing in mind that some

exaggerations might be evident in the way the heroes are being constructed for the sake of fiction, it should not be discounted that the works where intersex representations are depicted have contributed to the resignification of the intersex. Also, when referring to the intersex Bildungsroman I only understand those novels whose protagonists are biologically intersex and bear innate characteristics of both sexes. I do not assume that intersex Bildungsromane are novels that deal with transgenderism because intersex, as highlighted in the next chapter, is not a personal choice but rather a matter of essential biology.

Why is the genre significant for the intersex adolescent? The connection of the intersex with the Coming of Age novel is crucial at this point, as puberty is a period of transition during which people undergo major physiological and psychological transformations and simultaneously these adolescent years mark the essence of the Coming of Age novel. It is scientifically proven that many intersex people "are confronted with social and sexual issues at many developmental stages over the course of their lives" (Dreger D., Chase and Sousa 732). Additionally, many children who have intersex conditions have phenotypically unambiguous genitals and become aware of their condition only when entering puberty. It is evident that for many intersex children adolescence is delayed causing a sense of isolation from their peers that creates an awkwardness regarding the awakening of sexuality and intimacy issues (Lev 41). The Bildungsroman and its direct connection with the formative years of adolescence creates a sound area of expression of the challenges of an intersex teenager. In the end, emerging from the stage of growth and personal development, intersex people seek to be recognized as intersex even if they choose to identify either as a male or as a female.

The development of the intersex hero is illustrated in the novels under discussion which follow some distinct stages, which, I argue, comprise their Bildung. The elements of the intersex Bildungsroman under study in this dissertation, however, must not be restrictive.

I assume that most novels share a large number of some generic features, but, at the same time, a novel should not be excluded from the intersex Bildungsroman category if not all of the features are present. This polythetic classification allows for the fluidity and the openness that intersex itself preaches and desires. It should not be disregarded that there are many aspects of social identity one identifies with for example race, gender, class etc. Based on post-essentialist notions of difference and diversity and as Butler has suggested, one cannot only be a male, a female, or an intersex. On the contrary, one is at the same time, for example, black, middle-aged, middle-class, and a homosexual intersecting and conceptualizing shifting identities and learning to live within this intersection. I suggest that, in the same way that human beings fall into polythetic classifications, the intersex Bildungsroman addresses more than the intersex itself. It is not a fixed subgenre, but far from it, it marks an endless negotiation of possibilities and represents the deconstruction of normalization. Thus, I conclude that firstly, the selected texts do not certainly constitute a canon, and, secondly, that each of the selected novels shares some but not all the elements analyzed in the following chapters.

Texts about and by intersex people help us form a spectrum of cultural momentum and cultural perceptions of gender variables just as "texts about and by women help us to a theory of the novel of development . . . as a story of cultural moment, its uncertainties and desires concerning women and *Bildung*" (Fraiman 144). The Bildungsroman genre is, in this case, a means through which gender stereotypes are cast and the hegemonic conceptions of intersex are challenged: "The idea of becoming and *Bildung* makes it possible to organize material around the hero in a new way and to uncover, in this material, completely new sides" (M. Bakhtin 393). It can be suggested that Bakhtin had foreseen the infinite possibilities and variations that this genre can assimilate more than sixty years ago. Above and beyond the critique of the Bildungsroman, there is an indubitable fact: *Bildung* signifies the un/becoming

of the self and is a process that is constantly dynamic, but never wholly achieved. In my analysis of the novels, I use the fundamental concept of the Bildungsroman formulated by Bakhtin as every novel "that provides an image of a man in the process of becoming" (M. Bakhtin 21) replacing the word 'man' with 'human being' or 'individual' to place it within the intersex framework. Consequently, what the intersex Bildungsroman depicts is the individual that emerges from changes in his_her life and becomes a new individual following a series of formative experiences.

If art constitutes "a central part of that larger symbolic order by which a culture imagines its relation to the conditions of its existence" (Matus 5) then the intersex Bildungsroman materializes a cultural imaginary where intersex identity is explored as a symbolic system. Intersex narratives bridge the gap between true intersex experience and the aesthetic one. It is through the aesthetic experience, mainly literature for the purpose of this thesis, that "the unthinkable becomes thinkable [and] horizons can be transgressed" (Horlacher 13). Thinking along Ette's lines about the humanities' contribution to the life sciences it can be argued that "the discursive code that places the biosciences at the center of a society's attention" (984) can be manifested in the intersex Bildungsroman bringing the tangible intersex experience closer to the reader's empirical reality. Ette's understanding of literature and literary criticism rests on the idea that literature focuses on enriching artistically coherence with incoherence and it provides knowledge for living a life without a predefined modeling system. What is important in this characterization is the connection between literary tradition and the collective experience and the interrelation that is being cultivated between the text and the reader. Ette then highlights the importance of fiction as "fictionality creates a space of experimentation in which readers, in serious playfulness, can test out different life situations, with which they can engage to collect experiences that they could not have in 'real life'" (987). Thus, fiction offers the necessary rhetorical tools that touch on

problems about human existence and provides a vision of life that mirrors the essential acquisition of knowledge for living together (Zusammenlebenswissen[18]). Ultimately, it appears that this knowledge can be read as a vessel for understanding and accepting intercultural differences for a harmonious coexistence irrespective of cultural, social, or other differences. As a result, literature can simulate many life experiences in order for the reader to be able to 're-live' these forms of life practice (Ette 991) leading to the possibility of reclaiming the past, changing the present, and envisioning a future of new perspectives. Hence, the idea that literature, as a form of art, creates space that has an anticipated positive impact on society resonates with the concept of what Horlacher refers to as 'art as repository of the cultural imaginary', when "especially literature can be regarded as a particularly effective medium for the creation of alternative selves beyond what is deemed acceptable within a specific culture" (15). The intersex Bildungsroman thus serves as an imaginary construction that can reflect a world which sheds the patterns of bigenderism in favor of the creation of new subject positions.

The ways the young adult intersex protagonist tries to identify in order to achieve the formation of the self, signify that the concept of Bildung can be reflected in the young adult novels featuring intersex characters. Since literary texts are the object of my study, Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine will explore exemplars of twenty-first Anglophone literature where protagonists are young adult intersex individuals, namely the novels *Annabel* (2010) by Kathleen Winter, *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* (2012) by Lianne Simon, *Golden Boy* (2013) by Abigail Tarttelin, *Alex as Well* (2013) by Alyssa Brugman, *In Between* (2013) by Jane Hoppen, and *Middlesex* (2003) by Jeffrey Eugenides. Each of these novels follows a similar path of constructing the intersex identity and the protagonists are seen at different stages of their growth. I will analyze every novel in a separate chapter not

18 Zusammenlebenswissen is the term Ette uses to identify literature's task to display knowledge of living together in a given society in different conditions, possibilities and limits.

because there aren't common elements to be found, but rather because I like to think that if each novel is approached from a different angle, the result will serve as a more comprehensive look into intersex Bildung. The narratives will be analyzed as representatives of an intersex literary tradition by identifying common characteristics and I will discuss how they can be situated within the contemporary Bildungsroman framework and how the topic of Bildung is negotiated within the narratological frameworks. Throughout my analysis the most dominant themes and characteristics that are displayed in the novels will be outlined with a focus on how the Bildungsprocess of the protagonist is manifested. All of the novels will be considered as a whole referring to the Bildungsroman tradition, however, each in particular is examined with reference to the patterns that are identified as prevalent in the thematic and narrative framework of intersex Bildung.

3 HISTORY AND THEORY OF INTERSEXUALITY

To examine the multi-faceted influences of intersex, in this chapter I will highlight several theoretical and historical aspects important to this research: 1) definition of intersexuality, 2) historical models of intersex representation, 3) intersex treatment and the bio/ethical problem, 4) the foundations of the sex/gender binary, 5) feminist and queer studies influences on intersexuality, and 6) how the intersectionality of postgender and body essentialism is necessary to approach the mutable intersex identity. What is interesting, is to explore the ways in which intersex can transform the way we think about sex/gender dimorphism and how biological, socio-cultural, and historical factors have shaped the conditions of intersex intelligibility. The critical review of intersexuality is a necessary step towards the next chapter of the analysis of the intersex Bildungsroman.

3.1 DEFINITION OF INTERSEX[19]

The earliest term that was used to describe a person bearing genetic characteristics from both sexes was ‘hermaphrodite’. The word derives from Hermaphroditus, who in Greek mythology was the demigod son of Aphrodite and Hermes. According to the legend, the nymph Salmacis fell passionately in love with him. Hermaphroditus, not responding to Salmacis’ allure, was raped by her and both of them were transformed into one body, as Ovid vividly narrates in his *Metamorphoses*:

> Till, piercing each the other's flesh, they run
>
> Together, and incorporate in one:
>
> Last in one face are both their faces join'd,

[19] In this chapter and throughout my work I will use the term ‘intersex’ to refer to individuals with ambiguous genitalia considering that this term has been used by the majority of the activist community for longer, as explained later, and because I believe that it contributes to the intelligibility of my work, and it simplifies my narrative.

As when the stock and grafted twig combin'd

Shoot up the same, and wear a common rind:

Both bodies in a single body mix,

A single body with a double sex. (310)

Ovid vivified a myth that gave a reasonable materiality to the existence of hermaphrodite people in antiquity, who undoubtedly were not fictitious. In the legend of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, the fusion of a female and male body created a single body with a double sex that possibly grants a historically narrative precedent of the sexual identity of intersex. Hermaphrodites did not only appear in godly figures in mythology, but they were present as humans as well, for example Tiresias who was a blind clairvoyant balancing between the two extremes of man and woman.

The discourse about people with ambiguous genitalia has been raising heated points of contention in social and gender studies among others. The term 'hermaphrodite' was commonly used until very recently because it converted otherness into something more fathomable placing it into a mythological framework where the word had already made its appearance. A scientific approach to a third possibility, other than a male or a female embodiment, was nonexistent at that time. However, this term is nowadays anachronistic and bears denigrations[20]. The word 'hermaphrodite' tends to evoke images of otherness causing humiliation to many individuals. The more popular alternative of the word 'hermaphrodite' is 'intersex' which was advocated by ISNA[21] (Intersex Society of North America), a social movement organization (SMO) that was active in the 1990s. The term prevalently

[20] My hope is to use terms that will cause no harm to the people who challenge the sex binary. I will use the term 'hermaphrodite' whenever there is a reference in literature or in the novels before the 1990s, the term 'intersex' for the period of intersex activism burst and 'Disorders of Sexual Development' will be used selectively with regard to more current texts.

[21] ISNA is not active anymore, but its founder, Cheryl Chase, founded Accord Alliance to voice the rights of the intersex.

represented “a person [who] is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male” (Intersex Society of North America, What is intersex?). Intersex indicates a variation of anatomical genitalia, but this does not mean that all intersex people have ambiguous genitals. There are cases where a person has typical external genitalia but shares some internal genital characteristics of the opposite sex, like Max in *Golden Boy* discussed in this thesis. ‘Intersex’, which was first introduced by the biologist Richard Goldschmidt in 1917, has been generally accepted as a term by the intersex community, albeit it is still charged with carrying alienating messages in social interactions because the truth is that the intersex child is until today usually raised as either a boy or a girl. Rare is the case where parents will decide to choose to raise their children as intersex not only because of social but also legal adversities. Nevertheless, medical clinicians have also opted for permutations of the term ‘hermaphrodite’ such as ‘male-pseudohermaphrodite’ or ‘female-pseudohermaphrodite’ to define which of the two sexes prevail in the body. Recently, in an attempt to draw the focus away from gender and more towards patient-centered health care, there has been an effort to completely do away with the term ‘intersex’ by activist organizations.

The term Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD) was introduced in 2005 at the Chicago conference organized by the Lawson Wilkins Pediatric Endocrine Society and the European Society for Pediatric Endocrinology and it was unanimously accepted by all the medical professionals attending the conference. This decision has been called the ‘Consensus Statement’ (Lee and Houk) and it promoted numerous innovating changes in treatment which are discussed in one of the next chapters called ‘Intersex Today’. DSD is believed to have neutral connotation and to give prominence to a mere medical condition. It is a term that is advocated by intersex activists and members of the medical community at the same time. Yet, there are objections to the use of DSD as well. Keeping in mind that linguistic choices carry

various semiotic meanings, non-stigmatizing labels for people with ambiguous genitals has proven to be a contingently unrealistic goal.

3.1.1 Nomenclature Shift and the Sociology of Diagnosis

The term that is used for individuals with atypical genitals has been shifting through times and although it seems that the defining categories succeed each other there is, of course, a significant overlap of the terms ‘hermaphrodite’ and ‘intersex’ evident in history. The discourse revolving around intersex and its conceptualization has caused conflicts between medical practitioners and intersex activists. The main reason behind this tension is the difference between treating intersex as a medical or as a social issue. It is regarded that naming a condition as well as determining a diagnosis for it is not an innocent process because it provides the medical profession with authority over the patient as “the power of information is essentially the power of naming” (Melucci 228). When a diagnosis is found and a person is labeled, it is hard to escape from the frame of that label and reconsider the identity, hence the implications of naming medical conditions are grave (G. Davis). The interpretation of this process and the reasons lying behind the decision of the naming procedure is being studied within the frames of the sociology of diagnosis literature which is intertwined with Foucauldian discourse analysis.

As stated before, medical practitioners used to show preference to using the term ‘hermaphrodite’ and its various permutations for individuals that challenged binarism. All the same, ‘hermaphroditism’, as a term, is still frequently used in biology to typify species, such as various kinds of fish and amphibians that have both male and female organs. An answer to why the term ‘intersex’ was invented and widely adopted by the intersex activist organizations is provided by Davidson who contents that “[t]he ‘intersex’ terminology was an attempt to challenge the terminology produced by the medical realm and thus reclaim the

power of naming" (Davidson). The name shift occurred as a respond to the loss of authority over their own body as intersex people were used to being under the total control of the clinicians who offered corrective medical solutions for their bodily 'abnormalities'. As a result, the intersex category functioned as "an identity, a term of political cohesion and collective action, or a mixture of these" (Davidson 67) and a way away from the effects of shame experienced by the intersex. Intersex was a name that carried political weight and was received as a victory against medical oppression to fit into the heteronormative matrix.

DSD is a term that is receiving more and more acceptance by the medical community; however, Elizabeth Reis suggests that in the acronym DSD, the letter 'D' that stands for 'disorders' should change and stand for 'divergence' (xv). In this way a difference, and not a pathology that needs 'fixing', would be denoted, since, in reality, many intersex conditions do not require medical treatment. She points to the negative connotations of the word 'disorder' calling to mind that "the disability-rights movement has taught us that atypicality does not necessarily mean disorder" (156). With DSD there is again an underlying need to fix a condition so that the intersex body will be able to fit into the culturally accepted notions of binarism. In the same way the German Ethics Council employs the term DSD but instead of 'disorders' the letter 'D' stands for 'difference' to simply connote a biological description of a bodily situation (German Ethics Council).

Bringing sexual politics on the table, Reis suggests that the shift from intersex to DSD "represents a denial of a core feminist and intersex-activist principle that sex and gender are fluid". And this is, of course, because intersex was used as an advantageous tool for feminist notions about the social construction of gender. There are other researchers, too, who discard the nomenclature shift and challenge the alleged neutral connotation of DSD leading to controversial debates over the proposed terminology.

On the other hand, discussions about the intersex nomenclature point out an opposite claim. Davis (2011), for example, argues that the terminology shift from intersex to Disorders of Sexual Development, is intentional and favors the medical community rather than the intersex individuals themselves. Considering the rise of intersex activism in the 1990s, when reframing intersexuality as a social and not a biological condition became successful, Davis claims that medical professionals had to somehow regain their medical power of the body. Therefore, they invented the new linguistic term of DSD to "link intersexuality to science [again] and . . . justify surgery" (G. Davis 178). Thus, the medical authority is again believed to act as the prevailing initiator in the linguistic shift of the intersex classification.

Overall, consensus on a mutually accepted term, even among intersex activist organizations such as ISNA, OII, and AISSGUK has not been reached yet. To a certain degree, the switch from derogatory terms into neutral ones outlines "an important break from the Victorian medicalization of bodies with atypical sex that saw in their anomalies not a risk to the health of those individuals but a threat to the social body" (Feder 39). It is not, however, surprising that, taking into consideration that labeling is part of identity construction, 'hermaphrodite', 'intersex' and 'DSD' all carry codes that signify identity in various ways.

3.1.2 Intersex Variations

Some of the most common intersex variations are the following: *Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS)* is a genetic condition in which the individual's body does not react to androgens. The AIS individual has a clearly female appearance but does not menstruate, has descended or partially descended testes and usually a short vagina with no cervix. *Turner Syndrome* is a chromosomal condition in which girls have only one X chromosome instead of two and female characteristics are more often present but usually underdeveloped.

Individuals with *Swyer Syndrome* have a female phenotype, but they have not developed functional sex gonads, so their bodies do not produce estrogens and androgens which cause puberty. *5-alpha reductase deficiency* is brought about by a chromosomal deficiency which causes the body not to produce enough of the DHT hormone which is essential for male sexual development before and after birth. As a result, individuals with 5-alpha reductase deficiency have not fully developed external genitalia. Calliope[22] in *Middlesex* has this condition and is an example of a child that is raised as a girl but during puberty some secondary sex characteristics, such as increase of muscle mass and deepening of the voice appear. *Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH)* is a condition whereby there is an anomaly in the adrenal function resulting in the overproduction of male hormones. *Hypospadias* refers to the location of the urinary opening in the penis which can vary in size too, resembling female external genitals. Men with *Klinefelter Syndrome* inherit an extra X chromosome and have a karyotype of 47 XXY. At birth they have typical male genitalia which usually do not fully develop during puberty because of the underproduction of testosterone[23]. Certainly, there are other intersex variations, but it is not my intention to provide a medical compilation of all intersex variations.

3.1.3 How Common Is Intersexuality?

People outside the medical realm and the intersex community have an often distorted view on the frequency of intersex in the general population. Although the tendency of many cultures is to obscure the birth of an intersex baby by labeling it as a boy or girl immediately after birth, the truth is that intersex is more common than is generally assumed. Nonetheless, outlining this frequency in absolute numbers is an attempt difficult to pursue due to the

[22] All the protagonists of the novels read in this thesis have one of these or other rarer conditions.
[23] Information about the intersex conditions were taken from the US National Library of Medicine, ISNA, and the NHS. Of course, there are other intersex variations as well. For more information and a more extensive list of all the medical variations of intersex the abovementioned institutions and websites provide the necessary reports.

diverse parameters which need to be considered when calculating this kind of presence in the general population.

Admittedly, ambiguity arises when considering the incidence rates of intersex individuals reported in various studies as it appears to be impossible to define a universally valid rate of intersex births. Dreger fitly concludes that "[F]requency is specific to cultural spaces" (Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex 42) because firstly, it is difficult to define which intersex conditions should be measured, secondly, it is difficult to define which population sample to include, regarding ethnicity and time frame, and thirdly because even experts do not reach an agreement on the numbers presented. In addition, Hester agrees with Dreger's position towards the specificity of an intersex frequency due to four main factors: First, the frequency of the various conditions, second, many intersex conditions don't lead to genital ambiguity, so it is hard to decide what to count as 'sexual ambiguity', third, the population sample adequacy and last, the social parameters, such as history and culture, define what constitutes male and female (216). As a result, each study reports a different number and refers to different variations of the intersex condition span. The United Nations also adopt the idea of a frequency range estimating from 0.05% to 2% of the general population (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights). Of late, there has been an effort to establish regional and national network centers for the creation of databases which will support the creation of a unified registry of DSD. Especially after the 2006 Consensus, certified medical centers of expertise have been recording all cases of DSD to establish a standard for intersex treatment.

Among the most controversial studies, is the one presented in "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We? Review and Synthesis" which was conducted by a team of researchers under the supervision of Anne Fausto-Sterling. According to this survey, which considered the medical literature from 1955 to 2000 and all known causes of nondimorphic sexual

development, “approximately 1.7% of all live births do not conform to a Platonic ideal of absolute sex chromosome, gonadal, genital, and hormonal dimorphism” (Blackless et al. 161). Before discussing the tension that this admittedly high number of frequency incited, it is critical to consider the term ‘Platonic ideal’ which is being used in this study. Blackless et al. understand absolute sex dimorphism as “a Platonic ideal not actually achieved in the natural world” (151) which hints to the finite essence all things in existence possess, according to Plato. Their correlation of absolute sex dimorphism with Plato’s ideal about the fixed essence of things seems slightly problematic in this sense, but it is presumably used to highlight the impossibility of absolute dimorphism regarding the two sexes. That is why Blackless et al. propose a bimodal sex continuum in which sexual variations can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 1. In this figure, male and female typicality are represented by the two curves, where sex dimorphism appears in various acceptable forms within the curve, and the overlap between them pinpoints to the incidence of intersex.

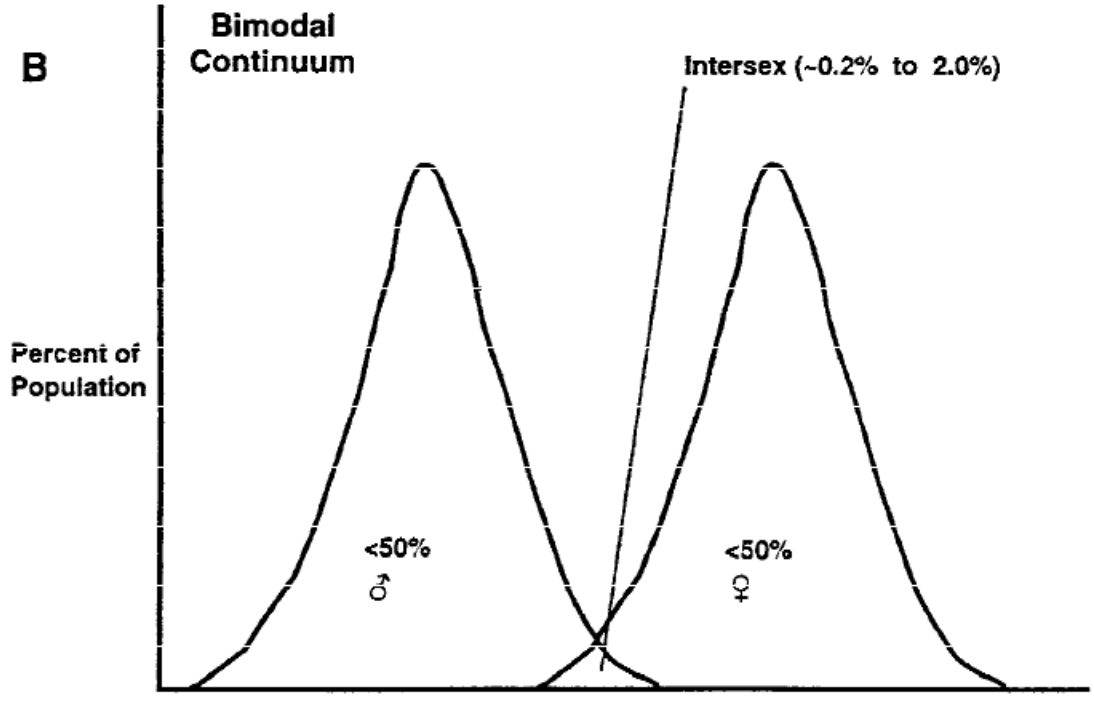

Figure 1: The bimodal continuum of sex according to Blackless et al.

Nevertheless, the incidence number reaching up to 2% provoked storms of passionate responses. For many it was not only an exaggeration but also a distortion of the truth. Sax accused Fausto-Sterling of including in her research cases that should not be defined as intersex. For instance, Late- Onset Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, Sex Chromosome Aneuploidies, and Vaginal Agenesis should not be included in the study because Sax believes that intersex conditions are only the ones "in which chromosomal sex is inconsistent with phenotypic sex, or in which the phenotype is not classifiable as either male or female" (177). If those non-intersex, according to the exclusionary principles suggested by Sax, conditions are taken away from the equation, the incidence rate drops dramatically to less than 2 out of every 10,000 births. The truth is that providing a frequency true for all intersex conditions worldwide is precarious, so possibly a broader perspective should be recommended. For Dea, for example, it is not the percentage that necessarily makes a difference, but that the percentage, which exists in all studies, no matter how low or high, "is committed to some degree of continuity" (88). Hence, I believe that a critical approach of the statistics is imperative but overall the understanding of the mere existence of intersex in a heteronormative society is of essence to my study because even according to Sax's cautious approach there were at least 50.000 true intersex individuals living in the United States at the time of his research (177).

Surely there are other studies that are more variation-specific and region-specific. For instance, a study conducted in Sweden, within which only the occurrence of hypospadias was analyzed, showed that from 1990 to 1999 the incidence of boys with hypospadias was approximately 8 per 1000 live-born boys compared to 4.5 in the previous decade (Skarin Nordenvall, Frisen and Nordenström). Also, the incidence of Klinefelter syndrome was estimated in 1:500 to 1:1000 live births and the incidence of Turner syndrome was estimated at about 1:2,500 live births. Accordingly, acknowledging that not all intersex conditions are

identified at birth, and some may never be identified has led to the incidence figure rising as high as 4% (Gough, Weyman and Anderson).

EUROCAT, which was established in 1979, is a European network for the statistical monitoring of the epidemiological surveillance of congenital anomalies in Europe that promotes public health. Every year more and more clinical registries become members of the EUROCAT and until 2018 the coverage of the European population reached 25%. The EUROCAT database is comprised of all cases of congenital anomalies and its aim is to provide a thorough registration service for all congenital anomalies and rare diseases in a European level, to facilitate the warning of teratogenic exposures and to evaluate the effectiveness of primary prevention strategies. In 2010 a ten-year trend increase was reported with regard to hypospadias. The results of the Pan-Europe monitoring from 1999 to 2008 revealed a prevalence of 13.78 per 10,000 births in hypospadias (Ahmed, Rodie and Jiang). The last data analysis that is available on EUROCAT's website states that from the data collected by all full member registries from 2012 to 2016 there is a 1,8% prevalence of hypospadias in LV (live births), FD (Fetal deaths), and TOPFA (Termination of pregnancy for fetal anomaly following prenatal diagnosis) (EUROCAT). Turner Syndrome and Klinefelter Syndrome are also registered with a 0.24% and 0.06% prevalence respectively. Other intersex conditions are not registered mainly because there is not sufficient data provision and because variations such as late-onset CAH arise only later in life.

If all the above are taken into consideration, it is discernible that an absolute estimate number including all population which will raise no confusion or debate is a complicated, not to say, an unrealistic matter. Since DSD have been suppressed for many years and parents and patients have been hesitant to come forward, it is suggested that a true number of incidences is not available so far and will also not be available in the near future. Additionally, as demonstrated above, the DSD variations studied in each report are another

fluctuating parameter to consider. Again, it should be noted that a critical look at the numbers is absolutely essential since they are time-, location-, and variation-specific and, as seen, contradictory. To provide an answer to the title of this section of my research, I suggest an estimate of 0.2 to 1.7% as an occurrence rate considering the studies that are available until today and which have been reported here. Ultimately, I am in line with Dea's view that looking at the greater picture, the fact that intersex is a reality, should be a higher priority.

3.2 HISTORICAL MODES OF INTERSEX REPRESENTATION

Hermaphroditism has been deemed as many things throughout the years: A monstrosity in the Middle Ages, a propensity for deceitfulness in the eighteenth century, licentiousness, and perversion in the nineteenth century, an impossibility leading to the assumption that hermaphroditism was clear evidence of homosexuality by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a condition that had to be medically corrected in the twentieth century. At the same time, the cultural and scientific construction of sex and gender have been reinforcing misconceptions about intersexuality and it seems clear that the understanding of hermaphroditism is firmly related to time and place.

It is interesting to see how science has shaped culture around the concept of intersexuality and how medical authority has had and still has power over the intersex body. One may understand the influence of science and medicine on culture if, according to Foucault, the society of normalization is taken into consideration. The differences between the eighteenth and nineteenth century medical practices shed light on the transformation of the medicine of health into a medicine of normalization. Foucault observes that eighteenth century medicine yielded control over the individual's health to the individual him/herself by providing the "possibility of being one's own physician" (Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic

40). By contrast, nineteenth century medicine "formed its concepts and prescribed its interventions in relation to a standard of functioning and organic structure" (Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic 40) whose center authority was the doctor. Sex determination became a facade for intersex oppression as by definition, oppression consists of "an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people" (M. Frye 10) and intersex people had no choice but to conform to the social mandate. Oppression and voicelessness imposed by society have been acting hegemonically over intersex people leading to the denaturalization of their subjectivity.

3.2.1 Up until the Middle Ages

Scholarship about medieval intersex representations and the lived experience of intersex in the Middle Ages is rather scarce. Intersex studies as part of the study of medieval sexuality is an emerging field that is yet to be examined in detail. Here, however, I will focus on discussing some of the main theoretical underpinnings of intersex during the Middle Ages and its concomitant association with gender studies. It was believed that the earliest historical narrative or literary depiction of an intersex person in history comes from Plato, who interpreted the classical myth of Hermaphroditus to support his claim that there is another sex besides the male and female. The fact that Plato first asserted the existence of androgyny – what was later also depicted as hermaphroditism – has been misinterpreted. There is no distinct account of intersex per se in his Symposium. Rather, what Plato did, was to offer an unequivocal explanation of the gendered identities and the origin of humanity through Aristophanes' self-reflective speech: "The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost" (189). This androgynous existence was the result of a discussion about the origin of love because

each sex is incomplete without the other and both halves form a whole. Nonetheless, recent readings of Plato's views regard that "these bisexual beings do not exist anymore, and that the word *androgynos* only serves as invective" (Groneberg 40). Surely, Plato's approach was not employed within the context of heteronormativity but was an effort to treat matters of gender and erotics and his beliefs were supported to the advantage of the republic as they contributed to his mitigation of reproductive capacities (Laqueur 54). Nevertheless, he extends an etiological explanation of an alternative form of gendered intelligibility and recognizability to what Western Christians later supported.

During the Graeco-Roman times hermaphroditism commonly alluded to playful efforts to interpret, or rather to render intelligible, acts of homosexuality in social relations and within the military setting. Even Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus has been read as an etiology for passive homosexuality situated between literature and mythology (Brisson). Additionally, in the Hellenistic era statues of Hermaphroditus were customarily used as representations of fertility and as jocular decorations drawing attention to the senses. Myths and rituals were intertwined and entangled Hermaphroditus in a symbolism of marriage that mirrored perceptions about sexual excess. As a consequence, the mythical symbolization resonated with the socially empirical environment.

Despite Plato's unsettlement of the sex dualism and the reference to the birth of Hermaphroditus in literature, the term 'hermaphrodite' did not connote an individual on the liminality between the two sexes in later times. The early Christian Fathers echoed the ancient Graeco-Roman beliefs about the perfectibility of the male and the imperfect mitigated nature of females, eunuchs, and hermaphrodites. Differences between sex and gender were not perceived during the Middle Ages, thus an ambiguous body was primarily unintelligible. At the same time, it was also an inciter of fascination and curiosity. Not surprisingly, from Greek ontology to Christian anthropology it was believed that the differences between men

and women were distinct and based on the women's inferior nature. These distinct biological differences were conspicuous at birth and invariable for a lifetime. Concerning the ideas about intersexuality over the course of Late Antiquity and medieval scholasticism, the views of the Cappadocian Fathers, among them Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, were discussed by Alois Dempf (Geistesgeschichte der Altchristlichen Kultur 123). According to him, the Christian Fathers believed that the distinction between male and female in sexuality arose as a consequence of the original sin. Prior to the original sin, humans, in their view, did not possess sexual distinctions; they resembled the androgynous figure described in the Platonic myth. This notion may have originated from Origenes, a prominent theologian of the Alexandrian school known for his adherence to Platonism. However, this concept contradicts the explicit language of scripture. In medieval times, for instance, St. Thomas Aquinas vehemently argued that humans were created as distinctly male and female before the original sin, and that sexuality was an inherent aspect of their prelapsarian nature. It is, however, worth mentioning that Thomas Aquinas shared his appreciation of women as imago based not on women's inferiority or fundamental inequality but rather on ontological differences. His assumptions are widely different from the Aristotelian assumption of women's inferior nature. As a result, instances of sex change like the description of the early modernist Ambroise Paré about a girl who was chasing her swine, and who suddenly sprung an external penis, can nowadays easily be identified as folk reimaginations of intersex conditions like 5-alpha-reductase deficiency.

Before the 15th century, the perception of hermaphroditism was based on two opposing views of sexual differentiation. According to Cadden[24], the first accreditation, the Hippocratic one, proposed that hermaphrodites presented a perfect balance between male and female nature, and thus were an indispensable part of natural form. The second model, the

[24] The Hippocratic and Aristotelian origin of generations are analyzed in depth in Cadden, Joan, 1993. *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages. Medicine, Science and Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aristotelian one, suggested that hermaphrodites were not situated in the middle of the sex continuum but were incomplete formations of genitals, "the product of a local excess of matter and imbalance of male and female principles" (Daston and Park 421) where the excessive matter was more for one child but not enough for twins. The Hippocratic and Aristotelian interpretations, each with the according sexual implications, were endorsed by Western theology and physicians throughout the Middle Ages resulting in either a tolerance towards hermaphrodites, because true hermaphrodites existed in real life, or, conversely, in the requirement of surgical intervention, because the hermaphrodite body had an excess of genital tissue that unbalanced the binary. Regardless of which principles were followed, many researchers claim that hermaphroditism was firmly connected to sodomy and that differentiation at birth was commonly attributed to the mother's vivid imagination during pregnancy or to her sinful behavior because "a pregnant woman's unruly thoughts could cause a birth anomaly" (Reis 5) linking the monstrous birth to a sign from God. The woman's defective nature was heavily reinforced by Christian theologian's assertions about the ontological difference between the two sexes and hermaphrodites were grouped with women as far as their subordination was concerned. The association of hermaphroditism with sodomy and cross-dressing was resolved by courts where judicial authority determined the true sex of each hermaphrodite. Hence, at that time, it was judicial, religious, and political power that controlled the fate of the hermaphrodites, contrary to later modernity when medical authority took the power over the hermaphrodite body.

However, a further opposing point of reference is necessary. The connection between hermaphrodites and monstrosity or sodomy in the Middle Ages is not supported unanimously. Rolker asserts that there is a fundamental misunderstanding regarding legal intersex history and furthermore claims that hermaphrodites were not associated with sodomy or monstrosity in medieval Europe whatsoever. Even if interest in hermaphrodites was low,

there is a series of listings about hermaphrodites' rights recorded by ecclesiastical law with a special focus on hermaphrodites' ordination. Hermaphrodites, he contends, were not classified as monsters as "they were understood as a 'third sex' (bodily different from both men and women) but for all legal purpose assigned either male or female gender according to the 'prevailing' or 'predominant' sex" (Rolker 188). As such, Foucault's idea that hermaphrodites were chastised for being monstrous and for being unlawful due to their monstrosity, is being questioned.

The progression from the early Christian view of the predominance of the male over the female and the hermaphrodite is supposed to be influenced by Luther's reformist belief that women deserved a higher work status that led to a concomitant strict division of labor. However, this approach appears to be rather a relic of the Liberal-Enlightened double myth of the dark Middle Ages on the one hand, and the Luther myth, on the other. It seems that the Renaissance is a period during which the boundaries between gender and sex were pretty fluid. The rigid distinction between males and females resulted in the successive marginalization of the hermaphrodites that reached its peak during the Victorian period. The development of the hermaphrodite discourse evolved between the medieval period and the Enlightenment and was characterized by an increased attribution to the sexual leading to the extended medical authority of early modern times. Especially the Enlightenment provided an elaborate ideology of organized forms of power, knowledge, order, and control through the formalized mathematical description of nature. In *Wonders and the Order of Nature* Daston and Park approach the subject of monsters in the Middle Ages as a matter of "three separate complexes of interpretations and associated emotions - horror, pleasure, and repugnance - which overlapped and coexisted during much of the early modern period" (180). The shift from horror to pleasure to repugnance regarding monstrous births signified concomitantly that the hermaphrodites were, too, interpreted and treated accordingly by scholarship, be it

legal, political, or medical, of the time. Scientific interest in the hermaphrodite case rose because of its role as "a custodian of the natural" (Daston and Park 125) leading to nature's dominance over culture. According to Foucault, a hermaphrodite is thus "a monster only because it is also a legal labyrinth, a violation of and an obstacle to the law, both transgression and undecidability at the level of the law" (The History of Sexuality 67). Ultimately, since hermaphrodite bodies violated the laws that were imposed by the State and Church, the natural essence of these roles had to be reaffirmed by categorizing hermaphrodites as unnatural, as monstrous. Hermaphrodites were not only associated with the Other as monstrous births, but they were later also characterized as preternatural eschewing from the absolute negative and monstrous implications. Preternatural signified a dealing with their situations that evoked awe as well, but, nevertheless, could be explained within the context of nature.

A practice that later became the norm, emerged during the early modern times forcing hermaphrodites to choose one of the two accepted sexes. This practice did not emerge only as a way to condemn hermaphrodites, but also as a way of being socially acceptable and as a way to avoid sodomy at all costs. It is also a matter of heated debate whether systems of gender in the Middle Ages could be successfully interpreted with contemporary notions of intersex or even queer studies. The alien nature of gender and sexuality in medieval societies accounts for the inapplicability of heteronormativity as a structural matrix of sexual identity (Phillips and Reay). As hermaphrodites challenged contemporary forms of gendered identities of the time, it was a result of both the Humanists and the Enlightenment philosophers who wanted to execute power in order to control anything that cast doubts upon the 'real' nature of being. Admittedly, hermaphrodites challenged contemporary forms of gendered identities. Also, hermaphrodites who managed to pass as one or the other gender were acceptable and even considered to have some legal rights. Before the nineteenth century

> The individual him/herself shared with medical and legal experts the right to decide which sex prevailed, but once having made the choice, was expected to stick with it. The penalty for reneging could be severe. At stake was the maintenance of the social order and the rights of man (meant literally). Thus, although it was clear that some people straddled the male-female divide, the social and legal structures remained fixed around a two-sex system. (Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body 36)

However, this either/or road that hermaphrodites were compelled to choose transformed through the years into a disguised attempt of society to eliminate sexual ambiguity, constrain heterogeneity, and construct intersex as real under certain conditions. The decision of the true sex of a hermaphrodite was not done voluntarily and it certainly was not a decision of the individual. As the anatomist Riolan stated in 1614: "[i]t belongs to the physician to know the sex of the hermaphrodites . . . without giving them the option to elect and choose the sex they would like" (30). The regulation of nonconforming bodies was the systemic process of society to control and subjugate the unintelligible that dominated later: "[T]he body of the child, under surveillance, surrounded in his cradle, his bed, or his room by an entire watch-crew of parents, nurses, servants, educators, and doctors, all attentive to the least manifestations of his sex, has constituted, particularly since the eighteenth century, another 'local center' of power-knowledge" (Foucault, The History of Sexuality 98). Sexually ambiguous people were led into muteness by the social dictate of mandatory belongingness to one of the two categories of man and woman, which in turn induced the deprivation of their social visibility.

What happened when somebody was unequivocally associated with symbols and signs of the unknown was that questions about the body of knowledge of that time were raised. The disorientation of knowledge that hermaphroditism caused can also be interpreted through the lens of what Sara Ahmed calls queer phenomenology as the hermaphroditic body

calls into question the way subjects used to be oriented. In this regard, queer phenomenology epitomizes Hilger's proposition that "the hermaphrodite's physical hybridity queers the Enlightenment ideal of elucidating the dark recesses of all natural phenomena, including the human body" (170) which helps to understand the way hermaphrodites were treated until the early modern period. In order to alleviate anxiety and to pressure society to embrace its fears when faced with the unknown, science functioned as a common thread in the hermaphrodite case to showcase reclaim of power by society. However, as I claim further down in my analysis of the intersex Bildungsroman, intersex pushes the boundaries of agency that go back to the Enlightenment reflecting a liberation from traditional gender norms.

3.2.2 From Monstrosity to the Age of the Gonads[25]

Although somebody could either be a man or a woman, deviations in the way men and women expressed their sexuality, what was later apprehended as sexual orientation, were acknowledged, and hence homosexuality both among men and women was real. The intelligible void over the concept of intersexuality was, however, not provided for, as the term hermaphrodite was used only to characterize a gender-specific behavior and did not relate to biological matters. According to Trumbach, in the early eighteenth century, a hermaphrodite was an "effeminate man who desired sex with other men" (115) or, when used to describe a woman, "it was usually to stigmatize female clothing that seemed to impinge on the male domain" (116). However, medical practitioners started noticing commonalities and patterns of hermaphroditism by the eighteenth century and documented their treatment in an effort to disclose groundbreaking practices.

[25] Dormurat Dreger in *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* traces back the history of the intersex and identifies three periods that have defined it: The Age of the Gonads (1896), the Age of Surgery (1950s) and the Age of Consent (1990s).

In *Bodies in Doubt. An American History of Intersex* Reis carefully details the history of intersexuality in America and addresses the responses of medical and legal authorities towards intersexuality from the first written evidence in colonial America until today. Due to poor knowledge of the anatomy, misconceptions about sex, and social prejudices, hermaphrodites were condemned, abused, and publicly humiliated. In addition, their reports were mutated into mythic stories of monstrosity until the medical profession became institutionalized. Later, Reis reports, in the Surgeon-General's Catalogue Index of published medical articles from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries "there are over a thousand citations for 'hermaphroditism' from the nineteenth century, several hundreds of which refer to cases in the United States" (50). Hermaphroditism was not a rare case in the nineteenth century when medical practitioners began to document exhaustively reports of their patients who challenged what was considered to be normal.

Dreger claims that the five taxonomical categories for congenital sexual anatomies, which include females, males, female pseudohermaphrodites, male pseudohermaphrodites, and true hermaphrodites, are illogical and outdated whatsoever (Dreger D., Chase and Sousa 729). This system of categorization which was first introduced in 1876 by Klebs and endorsed by the medical community, was based on the belief that true sex was determined only by the anatomical nature of the gonads. According to Klebs' chart, a male pseudohermaphrodite was someone who had two gonadal testes and female secondary sex characteristics, a female pseudohermaphrodite was someone who had two ovaries but at puberty developed male secondary characteristics, and a true hermaphrodite was the individual who held both testicular and ovarian gonadal tissue. Later, the modernization of Western medicine that took place in the nineteenth century turned intersex treatment into a scientific project that raised doctors' interest giving them authority over the ambiguously formed bodies.

The nineteenth century was a crucial time for the history of hermaphroditism. Not only because there were more medical reports of hermaphrodites but also because medical practitioners, using the latest scientific advancements, tenaciously insisted on pointing out the precise differences between males and females which could undermine social organization. “The social sex order had to stand as it did because it was the *natural* order of things” (A. D. Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex 27; emphasis added) and bodies that challenged the two categories posed a danger to the categories themselves. The term ‘teratology’ was used to refer to cases of unusual births conducing to the monstrous characterization of hermaphrodites. Despite their subversive treatment, hermaphrodites showed a continuous increase of trust to the medical profession not only for their medical expertise but also for their decision-making policies of sex identity: “By consulting with medical men, hermaphrodites and their parents supplied an important acknowledgment of the medical men's growing authority, and confirmation that the medical men were indeed the just and trustworthy arbiters of pathology and identity” (A. D. Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex 61). Consequently and to maintain the social order of the one-sex-one-body analogy, it was agreed that the ‘true’ sex of a person can be determined by only one marker, which was the existence of ovarian or testicular tissue; the ‘gonadal definition of the sex’, as Dreger names it, facilitated the biomedical determination of the body and imposed the male/female characterization for everyone, even for the hermaphrodites whose experiences were often doubted for the sake of a true sex. Thus, this period is defined by the fact that the answer to one’s true sex is to be found only in the gonads.

The Age of the Gonads extends until before the 1950s when a more psycho-social approach to hermaphroditism was introduced. In *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Intersex* Dreger gives a detailed account of the clinical and psychological methods used to identify the true sex of a person during that time. When a person was discovered to have

testes, although they had been raised as a woman, doctors instructed them to stop behaving and dressing like a woman and to assume their male identity because the indicator of their true sex (the existence of testes) led to that assumption. Prior to the distinctions among sex, gender and sexuality, the dominant belief was that "true males would naturally desire only females and that true females would naturally desire only males" (A. D. Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex 113) and based on that uncontestable assumption the hermaphrodite body had to be shoehorned into one of the two existing genders.

In terms of hermaphroditism and cases of doubtful sex, social order had to be maintained for another crucial reason. It was presumed that hermaphrodites who had a misdiagnosed sex at birth could possibly get sexually involved with the same sex and thus show inclination towards homosexuality. Since homosexuality was a deviant sexual conduct, surgeries to 'normalize' the hermaphrodite body and classify it into the category of man or woman started to become the norm as doctors decided that it was their right to fix their patients' bodies in order to fulfil the only life goal, namely reproduction: "Doctors depicted hermaphrodites and homosexuals alike as exemplars of degeneration - biological as well as social harbingers of family destruction" (Reis 61). The doctors who believed that homosexuality was congenital were the ones who connected it with hermaphroditism and mental illnesses: "By the end of the nineteenth century, 'psychosexual,' 'mental,' or 'psychical' hermaphroditism were all terms doctors used to describe patients who admitted to same-sex desire" (Reis 66). Surgeries were conducted in order to form an unequivocal sex irrespective of whether these surgeries could lead to lifelong celibacy or castration. Conforming to the societal role of man or woman was a culturally normative demand: men who penetrate women and women who welcome penetration in order to bear children. All the bodies that transgressed these clear-cut boundaries were hybrid forms that had to be

medically controlled because “hybridity brings with it ambiguity, and with that possibility threatens the orderliness of schematized reality” (Patel 136). Therefore, surgery was perceived as a means to protect the binary sex from hermaphroditism and to defy homosexuality safeguarding a new essentialism so that “fixed gender roles and heterosexual orientation” (Hausmann 98) had to be constructed.

The Victorian times or Age of the Gonads paved the way for medical paternalism and aimed the attention at the interest of society instead of the patient. It was also a time when doctors assumed hegemony over the patient’s body and made the decisions for them irrespective of physical and psychological pain. As a consequence, the medical management of intersexuality was validated and accepted as the standard intersex treatment. Medical treatment of the intersex has since then continued to be practiced worldwide to ensure a heteronormative function of the body through surgery and hormonal therapy.

3.2.3 The John Hopkins’ Protocol and the Age of Conversion

The Age of Conversion refers to the period beginning in the mid-1950s when clinicians no longer strived to discover the patient’s true sex; their job was now to determine a *best sex* for each of them (Germon). Social and medical tensions have been historically caused by competing views on and about bodies with ambiguous genitalia. As Feder points out, atypical sex anatomies posed a threat to society beginning in the Victorian age and a threat to the individual’s life that needed corrective surgery in the twentieth century (20). During the first decades of the twentieth century medical tomes about hermaphrodites were written in order for the formulation of a general medical direction to be followed. In 1937 the urologist Hugh H. Young published the *Genital Abnormalities, Hermaphrodites and Related Adrenal Diseases*, an elaborate textbook about several case histories of patients who were brought up with a mistaken sex due to miscalculations of primary and secondary sex characteristics at

birth. While Young was sceptic about medical treatments of hermaphroditism of the past, he "nonetheless supplied the foundation on which current intervention practices were built" (Fausto-Sterling, The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are not Enough 23). Young, along with the endocrinologist Wilkins who specialized in CAH cases, developed a clinical treatment of intersex, and considered these cases as natural defects (Feder). That was a time when it was greatly believed that the true sex of a person can be regulated through hormonal treatment.

In the 1950s, the psychologist John Money developed a protocol to deal with intersexuality at John Hopkins University. Money and his associates were the first to propose treatment standards for intersex individuals according to which gender roles should be assigned and fixed by the age of 3 for a more successful outcome of the treatment. Money was the first one to introduce the term 'gender role', the first reference of gender per se, as an indication of an individual's subjective identity. Following a rather constructionist approach, he believed that gender was not something one was born with and thus it was not an unyielding human feature. Instead, he tenaciously supported that gender was something contingent on nurture, something that could be cultivated by science and mostly by the environment. Thus, his treatment protocols were based on a point of intersection among biology, endocrinology, and psychology.

One of his profound interests was the origin of the "psychosexual roles", that is the social manifestation of gender-role behavior. Gender role, according to Money, is "built up cumulatively through experience encountered and transacted - through casual and unplanned learning, through explicit instruction and inculcation, and through spontaneous putting two and two together to make sometimes four and sometimes, erroneously, five" (Hermaphroditism: Recommendations Concerning Assignment of Sex, Change of Sex, and Psychologic Management 285). Social conditioning was for Money an aspect of the 'optimal-

gender policy', according to which, intersex infants with CAH, for example, were assigned as females at birth even if their genitals were extremely masculinized. Gender roles could be determined with surgical interventions which would eliminate any incongruence with the biological sex of intersex infants, putting parents at ease regarding their children's assignment of sex. Until then, medical practitioners regarded hormones as the primary factors of sexual development. However, Money's research concluded that, due to the fact that intersex individuals learnt to gradually accept their sex of rearing – even if physiologically there were indicators of the opposite sex – and showed no significant psychological distress, attention should be drawn towards cultivating gender roles from an early age. For Money, gender roles were considered more important than sexual appearance and the management of intersexuality was based on that presumption. Thus, first gender roles were defined and then the genitalia were surgically altered to match them (Cortez, Gaudenzi and Maksud 5). He concluded that "the sex of rearing was a primary determinant of an individual' s gender role and psychosexual orientation" (Karkazis 50) and set the foundations for the medical intervention of the intersex that would shape the standard of care for about five decades to come.

The medical practices that were conducted until the early 1990s derived, therefore, from Money's recommendations that individuals with atypical genitalia should be assigned a gender not based on the biological markers of sex, which are the gonadal, chromosomal, genital, and hormonal characteristics, but taking into account the psychological developments of a complete gender construction: "From the sum total of hermaphroditic evidence, the conclusion that emerges is that sexual behavior and orientation as male or female does not have an innate, instinctive basis" (Money, Hampson and Hampson 308). Money's key performance indicators for the best assigned gender resulted in rather odd examples of excessive or hyperbolic displays of masculinity and femininity (Germon 24) where girls

learned to perform exaggerated female behaviors and boys also learned to show off their masculinity exorbitantly. His protocols, which were based on empirical knowledge and research theories, were so widely accepted that almost every medical practitioner integrated them in their medical treatment of intersexuality. Money promoted his protocols based on the fundamental principle that not only "were the intersexed expected to be or become exemplary males and females, they were also expected to become exemplary heterosexuals" eschewing any possibility of homoerotic desire (Germon 135). What is more, genital surgeries should be performed at a very early age because firstly, phenotype was considered as a primary indicator of gender identity and secondly, parents would be able to adjust to their child's gender identity as soon as possible. So, in the process of gender construction, a truly perfect girl or boy was the creation of science and culture.

The complications of Money's protocols which regarded sex as not determined by biology but as a production of society were faced with disbelief when the very case Money had used to support his claim about gender rearing proved to be a failure. The now famous case of David Reimer, also known as the John/Joan case was about a boy who was ablated at a circumcision accident at seven months of age, and it was then strongly suggested by clinicians at the John Hopkins Hospital he be raised as a girl. This recommendation originates from a general assumption and medical advice which still asseverates that "it is easier to make a good vagina than a good penis and since the identity of the child will reflect upbringing, and the absence of an adequate penis would be psychosexually devastating, fashion the perineum into a normal looking vulva and vagina and raise the individual as a girl" (Diamond and Sigmundson, Sex Reassignment at Birth: A Long Term Review of Clinical Implications 299). Following-up on John/Joan's case, the scientist Milton Diamond approached David later in his adult life and found out that his sex reassignment had never been successful. David explained that he had very soon realized he did not feel comfortable

being raised as a girl and at fourteen he succeeded in convincing both his parents and his doctors to help him transition from female back to male. Diamond, who had been suspicious of Money's optimal gender practices, reintroduced David Reimer's story as proof for the dubious results of the early reassignment surgery advocated by many doctors. He refuted Money's principles that "individuals are psychosexually neutral at birth, and that healthy psychosexual development is intimately related to the appearance of the genitals" (Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body 70). What is more, Money's protocols have been severely castigated by the intersex society from the early 1990s when intersex adults questioned the irrevocable sex surgery, its necessity, and the trauma it caused on the life of the individual (Karkazis). This, however, does not mean that Money's model of a two-sex protocol is not followed by many physicians in Western medicine until today.

3.2.4 Intersex Today, the Intersex Movement and Intersex Politics

Since the 1990s Money's protocols have been vexing the intersex society and they have also been rejected by many medical professionals in light of research on endocrinology and DNA. Money's treatment led parents to believe that their child's problem had been treated and that the correct gender had been ascribed to them. Without absolving Money from the unethical practices that he used and the deceiving lies that he told parents and their children, Feder points out that Money did not prescribe new rules for gender; "rather, he formalized medical protocols that would be consistent with the rules of gender that were already in place" (47). It is undeniable that medical practices were humanitarian in their essence "reflecting the wish that people be able to 'fit in' both physically and psychologically in the medical community, however, the assumptions behind that wish-- that there be only two sexes, that heterosexuality alone is normal, that there is one true model of psychological health-- have gone virtually unexamined" (Fausto-Sterling 22).

New medical developments are restructuring the intersex treatment. Although there is no one-way medical protocol to treat intersexuality, intersex adult patients, forthright parents and some doctors have been trying to change the way intersexuality is being treated.

By the beginning of the 1990's, the intersex infants who had been treated under the Money protocol were adults and started to question medical authority on issues of intersexuality because they had either discovered the truth about their bodies, or they faced somatic problems while their medically 'fixed' gender did not match their somatic experience. That timing was also advantageous because of the general gender discourse upheaval supported by the earlier feminist movement, the gay and the transgender rights movement. The impact of the feminist movement and queer theory on the disclosure of intersexuality and its theoretical discourse is discussed later in this chapter. In 1993 Cheryl Chase, the founder of ISNA, set out on a journey of disclosure about intersexuality that broke the silence among intersexuals, parents, and the medical community. Her goal was to end shame and secrecy that was being experienced by intersex people who had to undergo unwanted genital surgeries because their bodies were not standard male or female and her aim was to provide a support network for intersex persons through this organization (ISNA). Intersex politics started to take shape especially in English speaking countries where intersex advocacy groups called for action on ISNA's broadcasting website.

Their first demonstration took place in 1996 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics in Boston where they proclaimed themselves "Hermaphrodites with Attitude" and called for the change of intersex treatment. In 1997 Diamond and Sigmundson published their guidelines regarding the management of intersexuality pushing towards accepting it as something "normal although atypical" (1046). Having firstly been faced with disbelief by the medical community, some of their recommendations were finally acknowledged and, as a result, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the British

Association of Pediatric Surgeons updated their treatment standards in 2000 and 2001 respectively. Their recommendations concurred with the activists' protocol in that they both recommended male or female rearing of intersex infants without any unnecessary genital surgery and counselling for parents and children at all times. What they proclaimed was to "[l]et the child grow and develop as normally as possible with a minimum of interference other than needed for medical care and counseling [and] let him/her know that help is available if needed. Listen to the patient; even when as a child. The physician should be seen as a friend" (1049). This suggestion goes hand in hand with the desire for self-determination that has been a constant goal of intersex activism.

ISNA stopped being active in 2008 but intersex activist organizations have multiplied in many countries since ISNA's debut in 1993. Also, various human rights bodies and National Courts, among others the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN's Children Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women, have recognized the cosmetic and non-medically necessary surgery in infancy without informed consent as human rights violations and have compared it with female genital mutilation (FRA). An attempt is being pushed forward whereby there will be a consensus on the long-term outcome of the intersex treatment including "external and internal genital phenotype, physical health including fertility, sexual function, social and psychosexual adjustment, mental health, quality of life, and social participation" (Hughes, Houk and Ahmed 560).

The effort to employ the cooperation of physicians in the fight for intersex rights started with the Consensus Statement (CS) in 2006 where medical specialists convened to revisit treatment guidelines and some of the most groundbreaking changes of the time were recognized:

- **Progress in patient-centered care:** The CS states that psychosocial support is integral to care, that ongoing open communication with patients and families is essential and that it helps with well-being; that genital exams and medical photography should be limited; and that care should be more focused on addressing stigma not solely gender assignment and genital appearance.
- **A more cautious approach to surgery:** The CS recommends no vaginoplasty in children; clitoroplasty only in more "severe cases"; and no vaginal dilation before puberty. It also states that the functional outcome of genital surgeries should be emphasized, not just cosmetic appearance. Perhaps most importantly it acknowledges there is no evidence that early surgery relieves parental distress.
- **Getting rid of misleading language:** By getting rid of a nomenclature based on "hermaphroditism," our hope is that this shift will help clinicians move away from the almost exclusive focus on gender and genitals to the real medical problems people with DSD face. Improving care can now be framed as healthcare quality improvement, something medical professionals understand and find compelling. (ISNA)

However, the crucial link between intersex activists and physicians was missing because activists mainly saw the doctors as the stakeholders and contrastingly doctors thought that the activists were biased. In order to relieve this undermining tension and to promote a collaborative relationship between intersex people and the healthcare system, ISNA closed its doors and reorganized as Accord Alliance, changing its mission. Their goal has been to "partner with patients and families, healthcare administrators, clinicians, support groups, and researchers to facilitate open communication and collaboration among all persons working together to improve care of those affected by DSD" (Accord Alliance). A successful

partnership between DSD support groups and clinicians is imperative for the establishment of a relationship of trust where patients will feel comfortable enough to expose themselves: "The collaboration with existing peer support groups is crucial for developing more support for specific conditions, for integrating peer support into the model of healthcare and for encouraging patient-centered research" (Lee, Nordenström and Houk 160). However, a total reconstruction of the intersex treatment that would signify a paradigm shift and would be internationally accepted by the medical community seems to be a complicated issue because it would change the whole socio-cultural discourse.

Since the 2006 Consensus there have been many efforts to create changes in the clinical approach that encompass new medical developments and the psychological well-being of the patients. These changes have been supported by the development of the International DSD Registry (I-DSD), a network of clinicians and researchers that enables the international registry of cases of DSD as a means of improving standardized intersex treatment. What the 2006 Consensus predicated was the formulation of a multidisciplinary approach of an intersex patient comprised of a team of experts in pediatric endocrinology, surgery, urology, psychology/psychiatry, gynecology, genetics, neonatology and, if available, social work, nursing, and medical ethics (Hughes, Houk and Ahmed). Studies, which have been performed to assess the availability of these multidisciplinary teams in various national centers of expertise show that in most of the intersex patient cases a multidisciplinary team of experts is implemented allowing for the families to be supported and make informed decisions (Kyriakou, Dessens and Bryce). This can be read as a victory for the intersex rights movement, but it does not necessarily denote the restriction and legal regulation of early gender reassignment of intersex infants.

Self-determination and body integrity has been an ultimate goal of intersex politics lobbying because history has shown that intersex people have been deprived of their right to

exist the way they are born. Legal recognition of an intersex status has also been a main issue for many advocacy groups, and it seems that in some countries people can opt for other possibilities beyond the bigender framework in the case of filling in legal documents: "Some countries, like Germany, Malta, Australia, and New Zealand, added the third box corresponding to gender on the birth certificates. It gives parents of intersex infants the right to choose the third option: marking the sex category "X" or "other". By doing so, parents and doctors are not forced to put intersex babies through surgeries that would turn them into male or female" (Kondratenko). ISNA and other advocacy groups have refrained from the suggestion of new conceptualizations of the sex/gender binary on account of the view that inclusion in and not fighting against the sex system is the aim of intersex activism. In Jansen's words "the point is not to dissolve categories, but to demand the right to self-categorization" (134) and this proposition could also be interpreted as a solution to the long-drawn debates about the sex/gender binary. Thea Hillman, one of the first members of ISNA, also puts the emphasis not on the definition of an intersex community per se, but on the acknowledgement of each and every individual's difference. It seems that Hillman expresses one of the main needs of intersex individuals:

> After all these years in the intersex community, I can tell you there is no intersex community. There's a bunch of people who have a variety of bodies, some radically different from each other, and even more different experiences. What many of us have in common are repeated genital displays, often from a young age. Many of us have had medical treatments done to us without our consent to make our sex anatomy conform to someone else's standards. Many of us suffer from intense shame due to treatments that sought to fix or hide our bodies. And many of us have experienced none of the above. (Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word) 148)

3.3 INTERSEX TREATMENT AND THE ETHICAL PROBLEM/BIOETHICS

Reflecting on the ethical issues that derive from the current medical practices of intersex treatment calls forth several bioethical questions. To be clear, the questions that are being raised do not refer to the necessary surgeries that are performed due to the life-threatening complications of intersex variations such as CAH. These surgeries are not a matter of ethical principles. The bioethical controversy of intersexuality has been acknowledged as a major matter of contention even among physicians: "No area of pediatric endocrinology engenders more controversy than the management of DSD conditions affecting reproductive development" (Lee, Nordenström and Houk 176). Complications arise when examining the surgical alterations intersex infants are subjected to because of the belief that their bodies challenge our social order and as such ought to be corrected. The intersex body is believed to be entitled to socio-cultural intelligibility and inclusion in the prevalent gender matrix only after medical intervention:

> The concealment of atypical sex anatomies that these interventions aim to achieve . . . makes of the bodies of those with atypical sex 'the problem' when we should better see the problem, not as one concerned with gender and genitalia, but as an ethical problem—that is to say, a problem located with those who find intolerable the variation that those with atypical sex anatomies embody. (Feder 3)

As far as the intersex treatment history is concerned, it is beyond doubt that children and adults have suffered a great deal of physical and psychological stress from the medical community and society. Since the 1990s, adults with intersex conditions have spoken out about the trauma, both physical and psychosocial, the medical management of their bodies has caused them. Their parents have also reaffirmed the standards the medical interventions have failed to fulfil. Patient advocates have questioned the necessity and the possible benefits

of such reconstructive surgeries. Above all, intersex activists demand that physicians ask themselves one question: "Is the normalizing surgery of the intersex patient a medical necessity or a cultural requirement for the individual's identity shaping and belonging to the community?" Feder claims that "the intention of such interventions *is* cultural" (128) and the implications of these interventions should raise awareness of the cultural structure of gender. The cultural imperative of normalizing the intersex body so that it fits the clear category of male and female bears various bioethical associations.

Besides, the normalization of the intersex body has been recklessly promoted because the unintelligible intersex body has been extending the limits of human understanding. Roscoe claims that "[w]hen one believes that sex is given by nature in two incommensurable forms, the attitude toward that which is non-binary shifts from ambivalence and awe to horror and condemnation" (Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America 210). In trying to question the medical practices of the intersex and highlighting the power of cultural imperatives, Dreger suggests that "when doctors see a clash between a child's body and the social body and they choose to address that clash by changing the child, they are in effect saying the social body cannot, will not, or should not be changed" (Intersex and Human Rights: The Long View 78). Nevertheless, intersex treatment is not a black or white issue. Rather, admitting that discussion and open-mindedness will restrain medically authoritative decisions over the intersex body is a possible way of going around it. As Morland concedes "an ethical account of intersexuality is one that through narrative ambivalence continually queries its own mastery" (Postmodern Intersex 330). That is, intersex causes the self-reflective debate over the limits of cultural intelligibility and the questioning of our core understanding of human nature.

Furthermore, the bioethical aspect of the medical management of the intersex body revolves around two major concerns. What is at stake here is informed consent and

paternalism (Tamar-Mattis). Intersex advocacy groups have been promoting disclosure of all the necessary pre and postoperative facts when it comes to any irrevocable surgery performed on an intersex body. Nevertheless, informed consent is not a necessary prerequisite for a treatment on an intersex infant as his/her parents along with doctors are the decision makers. Gender dysphoria and psychological trauma can be understood as a corollary to the lack of informed consent because "it isn't the 'not knowing' that damages a person's sense of self, but the revelation that others have actively prevented one from knowing something important about oneself or something considered significant by others" (Feder 102). That is why intersex advocates do not fight against the total reconstruction of the gender order, but their aim is for their subjective experience to be recognized and left as natural as it is.

Secondly, paternalism is another aspect of cultural relativism, as a person's ideas and decisions are to be understood and determined based on the culture, he/she lives in. Western culture has been structured on the male-female dichotomy for its social order so people with ambiguous genitals do not share common ground with the prevailing culture. As Sytsma has noted "[a]ttitudes toward intersexuality are clearly tied to cultural values" (262). There have been studies that exhibit a tendency in favor of the culturally predominant gender when considering the surgical determination of an intersex infant, for example male in Saudi Arabia and female in Malaysia (Taha; Kuhnle and Krahl). If this is the case, then cultural values play an important role in the decisions of gender regularization for intersex people. According to Chase, the medical authority often determines what the future intersex body should look like after surgery taking into consideration cultural norms: "Doctors consider the prospect of growing up as a boy with a small penis to be a worse alternative than growing up as a girl sans clitoris and ovaries; they gender intersex bodies accordingly and cut them up to make the assigned genders support cultural norms of embodiment" (207). This raises questions in terms of bioethics because an operation should only be performed when there is

real concern for the individual's health. Besides, acculturation of the intersex is so important because their sexuality does not resemble the traditionally heteronormative tendency and, as a result, it opposes the rules of the dominant culture: "The obligation to have sex is so deeply entrenched that when one is faced with a body that does not conform to the self-evidentiary ground upon which gender performance is said to take place, a sex will be surgically inscribed upon it, manufactured for it" (D. J. Hester 222). Consequently, it appears that the medicalization of the intersex body is synonymous with the narrative of the dominant culture and the provision of order regarding the normative constructions of sexed identity. But focusing on the individual's welfare, corrective intervention should not be applied because of the intersex's incompatibility with the binary system of male and female but only if a condition puts the patient's welfare in danger.

3.4 THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SEX AND GENDER BINARY

Understanding the sex/gender dichotomy, its implications, and its in/efficiency at present time is of vital importance in order to fathom the critical concept of intersexuality. In this section of Chapter 3, I will trace the conceptual meaningfulness of sex and gender for a number of theoretical frameworks such as the social sciences, feminism, and queer studies. The next point of focus is to comprehend the complexity of the analogy between these terms which seems to be inadequate when it comes to comprehend the identity of intersex individuals not only with regard to the blurry borderlines between sex and gender, but also with regard to its limitations. Relying on binary concepts and a cartesian dualistic approach to interpret the human body might hinder our perception of individuals who exceed these concepts. I will also approach the idea of the third gender/space continuum and its interrelatedness with intersexuality per se. Intersex research has played a major role in the growth of the concept of gender and theories about the absolute dichotomy between sex and gender can sequentially be repudiated after considering the history of intersexuality and cases

of intersex management. However, a totally invalidating approach to the binary might also not serve the cause of the intersex as will be seen later in the chapter. What needs to be included in contemporary intersex analyses is the need for a redefinition of the role of gender theory as we know it (Jansen).

The dichotomy between the terms sex and gender has been a controversial locus of discourse among scholars throughout the twentieth century and has expedited discussions around sexed and gendered subjectivities. The gendered categorization of society into masculine or feminine did not only serve practical reasons, but it also raised various rhetorical questions. What is the point of having only two gender categories? Why should there be an austere correlation between sex and gender? And how is it that in some societies there are more than two gender taxonomies acknowledged as well? It is not inside the scope of this work to give definitive answers to these questions, but to propose an alternative reflection on these issues.

Prior to the appearance of the term ‘gender’ as a codex of social relations, the term ‘sex’ encompassed both an ontologically biological and social identity. There have been numerous descriptions of how society normalizes biological differences and associates them with social traits and social roles. An eloquent description of the sex/gender system was given by the feminist anthropologist Rubin who defined it as “the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (159). Sex, as a term, has come to signify the reproductive abilities of the anatomical and chromosomal features of the body, whereas gender is how sex is perceived within social context. This is, by now, common knowledge because it has permeated our social organization. Until recently this categorization of the world seemed undeniable and ‘natural’ as “things are the way they are by virtue of the fact that men are men and women are women - a division perceived to be natural and rooted in

biology, producing in turn profound psychological, behavioral, and social consequences" (West and Zimmerman 128). The two sexes, female and male, have been socially and culturally exhibited in the two genders, feminine and masculine, reasserting notions of biological determinism. This concept is viewed on the basis of biological essentialism which assumes that "the experience of being a member of the group under discussion is a stable one, one with a clear meaning, a meaning constant through time, space, and different historical, social, political, and personal contexts" (Grillo 19). Beliefs about the binary system of sex and gender have come to appear so natural and incontestable that other subject possibilities that do not conform to this analogy have been treated with suspicion and impugnment.

Yet, there are many scholars, who cast doubt over this rigid binary. Amongst others, Judith Butler, has concluded that the sex/gender binary is a social construction that was invented in the twentieth century. She also asserts that "to the extent that gender is a kind of psychic norm and cultural practice, it will always elude a fixed definition" (Butler and Kotz, Liz 86). Fausto-Sterling, again, inverts the biological basis of the sex in that she questions the criteria upon which the female and male sex are based on. She highlights the cultural beliefs that are hidden behind the scientific decisions of the two sex categories society has established: "[L]abeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender - not science - can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place" (3). In addition, other scholars heavily criticize the sex/gender system in that it reinforces sexism and homophobia by excluding gender variant individuals from cultural assimilation: "The segregation of the world into two sexes is, on a daily and systemic basis, a function of gender and its correlate sex category; and it is that fact that brings sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia into existence" (Gilbert 109). The abovementioned beliefs share the common

assumption that the stringent standards of the sex and gender categories seem to fail to give reasonable explanations for the existence of bodies that transcend these boundaries and due to this failure surgical manipulations are imposed on them.

Another line of reference is necessary before arriving to the split between sex and gender, namely the one-sex and two-sex theory. According to historian Thomas Laqueur, from ancient Greece up until the years of late Renaissance it was believed that anthropological existence was based on the one-sex theory as men and women were basically the same, save for the female reproductive organs which were embodied in the male body: "In this world the vagina is imagined as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles" (17). And he further explains that "[s]ex and gender were in the 'one-sex model' explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate was impossible" (21). Moreover, the existence of one predominant male sex also served patriarchal normativity and justified an ad hoc female inferiority. Sex variations and differences in morphologies were considered as variations of one type of body mainly the male one. Sex was clearly not connected to strictly biological terms, but it included social behavior too. The two-sex/two-genders system was introduced in Western culture because of the scientific advances which proved that the previous one-sex model was insufficient. Laqueur, however, insists that "sexual difference was created despite, not because of, new discoveries" (169) and emphasizes the natural similarities between men and women. His point of view was discarded by biological essentialism but considering the development of science and research on intersexuality, it seems that Laqueur's notions would stand against judgments, which emerged because of the normalization of sex, about what is considered to be normal and abnormal.

One cannot discuss sex and gender without referring to Foucault's *History of Sexuality* where he refutes the commonly believed theory that during the Victorian era

sexuality was repressed and kept a secret. Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, discourse about sex was transformed into a more manageable form within the confessional approach of Christianity that led to a certain politics of language and power (Foucault, The History of Sexuality 18). Talking about one's sexual desires and confessing their sins was obligatory for every good Christian and it was a way to control the unknown, a way to impose power over and regulate human sexuality. This sexuality "was interpreted by a figure of authority" (Spargo 15) and it was consequently a constructed category of knowledge. Yet, if confession is interpreted as a method of regulating power, it should be reminded that confession was a routine for the aristocrats who performed as moral agents. The mechanisms of spirituality and self-constitution that were employed controlled the passions and needs of the elitist cultural environment. As a result, this new way of repression, which does not connote a literal repression but rather a metaphorical one, "coincide[s] with the development of capitalism" (5) that interpreted human sexuality in terms of rationality and productivity "regulating sex through useful and public discourses" (25). Foucault systematically applied social constructionism to the order of human sexuality and insisted that the latter is a cultural construct. He underlined the substantial relation between sex and power and clarified that "power prescribes an 'order' for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility" (83). This constitutes unintelligible anything that cannot be described or apprehended by means of the understandable analytical categories. Foucault further showed how in the last two hundred years Western pre-modern society attempted "to say no to unproductive activities, to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practices whose object was not procreation" (36) because they did not comply with the principles of an economically productive society. Using the Foucauldian theory about the "dissemination and reinforcement of heterogeneous sexualities" (61) because it was necessary to make sexuality interpretable, the deployment of the two-sex-mechanism, which was needed for the proliferation of the neo-

Marxist society, was related to the socioeconomical values of modern society. Discourse about sexuality was produced but also regulated through modes of scientific surveillance; the medical management of the female body in order to secure procreation, the creation of boy's dormitories to control masturbation, the encouragement towards psychoanalytic confession of sexual desires and the increase of use of demographic studies in order to control and regulate population growth.

Connell suggests that it was Western ideology that emphasized the separation between the two sexes and emphasized the importance of this distinct classification in the late nineteenth century:

> Men and women had traditionally been thought of as the same kind of being (though one a more perfect version than the other). Western culture increasingly rejected this view and defined men and women as different in nature, even opposites. [M]en and women were irrevocably assigned to 'separate spheres' suited to their different natures. . .. Thus, Western bourgeois culture – now the dominant culture in the world – came to include a powerful ideology of innate differences between people. (Gender 86)

It was only until the beginning of the twentieth century that the views of the two differentiated, opposite sexes and genders dominated. Men and women differed not only in biological matters but also in their cultural lives as well. Consequently, the idea of bigenderism spread and affected all aspects of social behavior and culture where ideas of sex and gender correlation are dominant. As far as the linguistic disparity is concerned, Hausman refers to the first emergence of the term 'gender' in the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary in the twentieth century as a sociocultural signifier. She highlights the fact that while in 1933's edition, the term 'gender' was an equivalent for 'sex', in OED's second

edition in 1989 there was an emphasis on the term's social and cultural connotation as opposed to the biological distinction between the sexes (Hausmann 7). The turning point for this paradigmatic shift of gender being primarily used as a linguistic tool and ultimately as a category of human signification, happened in the mid-twentieth century when John Money's use of the term 'gender role' and the establishment of the medical treatment of intersexuality was based on an individual's biologically sexed and socially sensed identity as analyzed in the previous section. For Money gender roles were defined as:

> [A]ll those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively. It includes, but is not restricted to, sexuality in the sense of eroticism. Gender role is assessed in relation to general mannerisms, behaviors and attitudes; preference in games and recreational interests; spontaneous themes of conversation, content of dreams, ramblings and fantasies; response to oblique surveys and projective tests; evidence of erotic practices and, finally, the person's own responses when asked. (Money, Hampson and Hampson, 1955a, 304)

In Money's eyes, gender was not separate from sex, and he did not acknowledge a sex/gender distinction. He clearly believed in the interactive nature of gender as it derived from a discourse among the bodily, the sensory, and the social. He further believed that sexuality was an indispensable part of gender and not part of an identity. Money's research on intersexuality and the popularity of his ideas among the scientific community gave credence to the concept of 'gender role' which was a learned behavior that should be taught by the age of two and could eradicate any hormonal or genetic predominance of the body. His conclusions were so important that the management of intersexuality was predicated on the constructionally medical and parental intervention on the intersex infant body.

Following some years, Robert Stoller, an American psychologist, and psychoanalyst, who was doing research on homosexuality, transsexuality, and intersexuality in the 1960s, was also concerned with the social synecdoche of gender. In his book, *Sex and Gender*, he coined the term 'gender identity' and drafted "the concept of 'core gender identity' for the feeling of 'I am a male' or 'I am a female' as distinguished from 'gender role' for either a masculine or a feminine way of behaving" (Wålinder 4). Stoller's breakthrough was his success in unveiling the dichotomy between sex and gender where sex denoted the material corporeality and gender all the psychological behavior related to a masculine, a feminine or also a third identity. His suggestion of a third intersex subjectivity detached him from Money's male and female dichotomy. However, Stoller admitted that bodies which challenged what was already known could not evade their grim fate and implied that one of the possibilities of ambiguously born bodies was to accept their "fate of not really belonging to the human race" (Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity 35). In this context he reiterated stereotypic notions that connect intersex with the Other and discard them of their humanity.

Feminism conduced to anti-essentialist views of the social construction of gender identities and supported the renouncing of sex/gender inequality. Additionally, feminism and social constructionism played a compelling role in clarifying that the connections between sex and gender are not natural but dependent on acts of discourse which were commonly led by male scientists. In the next section I will explore how feminist and later queer theories affected the intersex movement in transforming gender in a tool of power.

3.5 FEMINIST AND QUEER THEORIES RELATED TO INTERSEX STUDIES

The starting point of this chapter will be the primary understanding of the initialism LGBT and the fact that the addition of the initial 'Q' after LGBT, standing for queer, is considered

problematic by many queer activists. This clarification will give plenty insight into the dis-/association of intersex with queer theory and its underlying politics.

LGBT is an initialism that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual. In order to capture the several identities of the spectrum it often is the case that the acronym is expanded. Depending on the use of the term and whether sexual orientation is the focus or non-heteronormative identities as such, the expansion may come to appear as long as 'LGBTTIQQ2S', which stands for 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, and Two-Spirited' (Shannon 100). Truly, confusion arises when intersex is included within the broader spectrum of the LGBT community due to the implications of the everlasting battle of intersex identities between constructionism and essentialism.

Intersex studies are considered to stem from anti-essentialist feminist and queer theories that criticize the social imperative of bigenderism and point out the fluidity and construction of the gendered categories of 'man' and 'woman'. When intersex activists started making themselves heard and seen, it would seem unthinkable that feminist support would not be provided since both were supposed to start off on the common grounds of fighting against prevailing conceptualizations. Feminists had a profound disbelief in the oppressive nature of hegemonic power and everything that was considered 'normally' female while intersex activism questioned the power of hegemonic heteronormativity and 'normalizing' surgeries. Still, feminist support towards intersex activists was not offered lavishly especially because, as Chase has argued, "intersexuality undermines the stability of the category 'woman' that undergirds much of first-world feminist discourse" (208). Most of the feminists failed to draw connections between the hegemonic culture's control over the female body and the biomedical rule over the intersex body. Chase highlights the discrepancy between feminists and intersex people by focusing on their normative variance: "To the

extent that we are not normatively female or normatively women, we are not considered the proper subjects of feminist concern" (208). Many intersex activists denounced feminism because they were convinced that feminism was insufficient in bridging the gap between heteronormativity and people who challenged the sex binary. The truth of the matter was that everybody who did not fall inside the privileged endpoints of a binary framework could not be intelligibly perceived.

Coming back to the dichotomy and analogy between sex and gender and how feminism elaborated on that, one of the earliest feminist thinkers in the seventies, Germaine Greer, wanted to make clear that there is no reciprocity between sex and gender by deriving evidence from the world of nature. She proclaimed that as sexual dichotomy does not exist in simpler forms of life, sex differentiation is not exclusively dyadic in humans as well (30). Actually, many feminist scholars resorted to Money's and Stoller's ideas about sex differentiation and found the study of intersexuals interestingly useful for the promotion of their anti-essentialist perspectives: "Biological sex can be and often is reconstructed to allow the individual to play his or her gender role without confusion and risk of social ridicule. Here it is biology that is plastic in the literal sense and altered to conform with identity: not identity that is shaped by biology" (Oakley 165). In spite of the recognition of the intersex as evidence for the insufficiency of a binary framework, feminists did not acknowledge the intersex's inability to conceptualize space-form relationships and they "rendered the intersex as outside the realm of the fully human" (Germon 99). Thinking over the insistence of early second wave feminists on underscoring the differences between sex and gender, it is cogent that the influence of bigenderism and the dichotomous relationship between men and women and nature and culture were reinforced and the authority of medical discourse that wanted to 'fix' the intersex body was overlooked.

The reason behind the lingering of the intersex in an invisible pathological sphere could lie in Money's directives about the management of the intersex individual. Also, what was considered as feminine and masculine behavior had been engraved in the social and medical hard drive and remained uncontested by the majority of the feminist thinkers. As Germon points out, Tresemer was the first to offer a critique of Money's intersex case management and propose a way out from the connotations of intersexuality with monstrosity and abnormality: "[I]t is our more advanced civilization that treats the intersexual as an unclassifiable monster and tries, through surgical and/or behavioral engineering to fit the person into one role or the other. Thus, bipolarity better describes what we think about sex differences rather than what they necessarily are" (Tresemer). However, his engagement with the intersex was not enough to keep intersexuality within the feminist view. As a result, feminism has been criticized because even though intersex was employed as evidence against the sex/gender binary, and as a way to deconstruct essentialist notions of binary sex, feminists only rarely cast doubt on the social norms of surgery reassignment and hormone treatment of the intersex.

Gender was used by feminism as a tool for the unequivocal articulation of the differences between the two sexes and for the discard of women's inferiority in the social and economic sphere. While the emergence of the term in the mid-twentieth century was considered revolutionary and was adopted by feminist thinkers, it has lately been suggested that it has reached its limits. It is assumed that not merely is the binary model of sex and gender redundant, but it is also insufficient as an analytical tool to feminist scholars and also for the identification of intersexuality. At the same time, gender has been a theoretical concept that has been posing a barrier for intersex corporeality because in order to be a gender one must be one of the two sexes. Some feminists have drawn the conclusion that thinking beyond today's understanding of bigenderism might open up more possibilities for

other kinds of personhoods and that gender has done more harm than good. Jeffreys admits that gender functions as an ideological system that justifies and organizes women's subordination and for this reason it must be dismantled (187). The dismantlement of gender whatsoever is used as a rationale that the current epistemological frameworks are unable to accommodate an intersex subjectivity and corporeality.

As far as the affiliations between intersex and queer studies are concerned, it is common to position the intersex movement within the general movement of the sexual minority groups, because both intersex and queer deconstruct and transcend the heteronormative culture and the heterosexual matrix. Nevertheless, from an intersex point of view, this affiliation has also been strongly rejected because it can be seen as a diminution of the intersex community: "The history of intersex has been [one of] constant erasure and assimilation. In order to speak clearly about intersex issues from many different perspectives, it is necessary to establish bridges with the whole human community and avoid becoming one more invisible minority within another minority" (Joelle-Circe). This concern refers to the power of strategic essentialism that could possibly undermine the intersex activists' interests by putting all sex/gender variant people under a collective term.

Nowadays, especially after the 2006 Consensus, intersex activists do not align with radical LGBT and other queer identity movements not only because of their appreciation of constructed bodies and identities, which intersex tries to unsettle fundamentally. Several intersex advocates have put the queer agenda under the microscope leading them to their refusal to side with a broader queer politics movement. The ground for this is their belief that intersex cannot be easily classified in a specific group of sexual orientation such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual because their sexuality is not what is at stake. However, in the end, intersex has nothing to do with sexual orientation or the possibility of technically or scientifically creating sexuality. There is also no connection between intersex and transgender

studies as far as the brain function of the latter is concerned. Research on the construction of transgender identity has recently shown that the biological difference can be identified as early as before puberty (Hamzelou). But, once again, is this really something that the intersex identity claims as well? The policing of identities and the consolidation of a unified queer identity is not at stake either. According to Koyama, founder of Intersex Initiative, intersex activists did not team with the general queer movement because "what they sought were professional psychological support to live ordinary lives as ordinary men and women and not the adoption of new, misleading identity" (89). Labelling their identity within a certain framework is not what the intersex is concerned with. Besides, for Halperin queer is "by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers" (62). With intersex, what is at stake is not an anti-normative identity construction. Instead, with intersex everything is particular: from the issue of medical maltreatment to the need for psychological and medical support that will allow them to 'legitimize' the intersex experience and come to terms with it.

Another factor that should also be considered is the great involvement of the dominant medical community to ensure the appropriateness of the intersex body. Queer and especially trans communities have been in tension with intersex because of the latter's alleged ease and access to medical intervention. A claim that is offensive to the intersex community considering the hegemonic power science has had over the intersex body. The obstacles the transgender have to overcome for a medical gender transition have made them want to be recognized as another version of intersex, a kind of mind intersex, in order to have access to gender transition services. This assertion is refuted by the intersex because it grants justification to the medical management of the intersex body. It is an unfair assertion, to say the least, in view of the political and medical techniques the intersex have been subjected to over the years.

On the other hand, queer communities have too questioned the right of the intersex to 'belong' to queer since many intersex conditions are not phenotypic and many intersex people are considered heteronormative after a 'normalizing' infant surgery. This positions the intersex in another version of neither/nor displacement. The sense of not belongingness appears to be recurrent for the intersex as it is experienced not only individually but also as members of a "netherworld" where they are pinned in a fuzzy in-between place (M. Holmes, In(to) Visibility: Intersexuality in the Field of Queer 225). Yet, Holmes yearns for a future where "queers will not question the validity of calling oneself 'queer' even if no one can *see* their difference (226). In other words, from a queer perspective, a queer account of intersex is believed to become a possibility if queer withdraws its restrictions from visible to invisible queerness as well. And this is possible only when intersex and queer are understood within an identity and not a disorder framework (Costello) while not necessarily belonging to the LGBTQ+ group.

What these communities have in common, however, is a background personal experience of stigma, shame, and loss of body autonomy. These are factors that have brought the intersex community closer to queer politics and facilitated the advocacy of intersex rights. Moreover, Morland focuses on another connecting point between queer discourse and the intersex, mainly pleasure: [D]esire is what queer theory and the postsurgical intersex body have in common [because] [i]f queer theory can tell us why pleasure is valuable, then it follows that a queer discourse of pleasure can pinpoint why the diminution of pleasure makes genital desensitization wrong (What can Queer Theory do for Intersex? 287-288). This idea is related to the desensitization of the intersex body after medical interventions and how this is connected with the broad interest of queer studies in the importance of body sensation and body pleasure and desire. By defending their right to pleasure, queer may inadvertently

underscore the unnecessity of medical normalization since many intersex autobiographical writings talk about the loss of erotic sensation after corrective genital surgeries.

3.6 FRACTURES IN THE BINARY: FROM THE THIRD SEX TO POST-GENDERISM

Understanding human nature beyond the sex binary has been causing so much trouble and is so strenuous because it is a cultural system deeply embedded in the social imaginary. It undoubtedly appears that, with respect to biological practice, there are only two chromosomal types, XX for female and XY for male. The sex/gender analogy which indicates that female sex corresponds to feminine gender and male sex to masculine gender was considered irrefutable until the twentieth century medical breakthrough in molecular medicine. Before that, divergences from the male-female idealized dimorphism were characterized as monstrous, abnormal, and/or psychotic. However, the dimorphic division does not comply with the developments in medical and anthropological research anymore which, hence, calls for reconsideration.

Regarding gender categories, it is self-evident that categorization leads to organization, which consequently leads to the perspicuity of social relations. Conforming to the societal norms of gender intelligibility is a prerequisite not only to be accepted into the standard, but also, as Reis contends, to be considered human: “To be human is to be physically sexed and culturally gendered” (Bodies in Doubt. An American History of Intersex ix). As a result, corporealities that fail to fit into the heterosexual hegemony resist authoritative power and challenge the social establishment. In her discussion about the political possibility of constructing non-hierarchical genders, Haslanger suggests that “the act of classifying someone as a member of a social group invokes a set of ‘appropriate’ norms and expectations [and] it carries prescriptive force” (47). These socially constructed

restrictions label and define behaviors when adapting to the oppressively designated binary gender identity. What remains unclear with this social classification system is whether there is a potential to negotiate new terms of identification where the norms are nothing but fixed and the continuum among genders is variable.

3.6.1 Alternatives and the Third Sex Premise

The notion of the two distinctive sexes follows the essentialist framework, according to which being a man, or a woman is a legacy that is given to one at birth. It's an inherent form, an axiom, that is perpetual and constant. This dimorphic theory is also mainly based on the Darwinian thought that "'male' and 'female' are innate structures in all forms of life, including human beings, and that heterosexuality is the teleologically necessary and highest form of sexual evolution" (G. Herdt, Third Sex, Third Gender 28). West and Zimmerman suggested an alternative method of classification in order to highlight a gendered individual's interactive nature in society that might demonstrate what seems a natural behavior but, in reality, this behavior is a "socially organized achievement" (128). They proposed the distinction between sex, sex category and gender where sex "is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males", sex category "is achieved through application of the sex criteria, but . . . categorization is established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays [and] [i]n this sense, one's sex category presumes one's sex and stands as proxy for it in many situations, but sex and sex category can vary independently". Finally, gender is "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (127). For West and Zimmerman being classified in one of the two sex categories, woman, or man, and exhibiting behaviors and performances of one of the two genders, feminine or masculine, is the axis of bigenderism and heteronormativity. However, by recognizing that we have the ability to "learn to produce and recognize

masculine and feminine gender displays" (130) and by adding the sex category to the equation they believed that the interactive nature of gender and sex category was intensified.

In the collection *Third Sexes and Third Genders*, Herdt underscores the totalizing effect that Darwinian heritage has had on the social construction of the dimorphic division of sexual identity because it led to the assumption of an "existence of a two-sex and two-gender system in all times and places" (32). After his sociohistorical report on the theoretical framework of the hegemony of fundamental dualism he concludes that:

> Ultimately this imagery [of fundamental dualism] is based on a worldview that imagines sexual differentiation in human development to strive ultimately for biological reproduction, while the purpose of gender differentiation is to further the symbolic regeneration of society through the division of labor, social productivity, kinship and family structure and, of course, sexual relations. (46)

In other words, it was not possible to escape the sex classification given at birth by any means because any deviation from the dimorphic model constituted an act of sodomy or anomaly. On the other hand, suggesting that doing away with gender constructionism can leave us with three sexes – male, female and intersex- and no gender, is another reification of essentialism under which intersex is again being marginalized. That is because, as seen with various cases of intersex conditions, the intersex body undergoes constant changes and is perceived within fluidity. Hence, a sexed or gendered spectrum reinforces oppression created by social norms of classification.

In his attempt to popularize psychoanalysis and raise awareness of sexuality by identifying variations of sexual expression, Freud published his *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* in 1910. Although he acknowledged the existence of hermaphrodites and presented them as "cases in which the sexual characteristics appear blurred and thus the

sexual distinction is made difficult" (7), he then continued by exemplifying them as the abnormality that functioned as an avertible example. That is, hermaphrodites existed in order to remind the rest of the world of its own 'normality': "The importance of these abnormalities lies in the fact that they unexpectedly facilitate the understanding of the normal formation" (Freud, Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory 7). As a result, his perspective on matters of sexuality assumed, just like the above-mentioned Darwinian cogitation, that non-reproductive behavior, which is what the intersex existence was considered to be, was firstly culturally unacceptable, secondly it did not achieve the ultimate aim of human existence and finally crossed the borders between normality and perversion.

Yet, a question must be asked: If reproductive behavior is the ultimate essence of life, why should another possibility beyond the dualistic classification of sex be acknowledged? Does not everyone see themselves in the dyadic symbolic classification of the male and female identity? According to socio-anthropological studies, that is a question that has multiple answers. Cultural reality has called for the uncontested sexual assignment into either male or female for anybody who deviates from the culturally acceptable norm, albeit this is another way to pretend that anthropological differences do not exist and that there is a consistent worldwide congruence between sex and gender. In light of Simmel's sociological approach, the triad was brought forth because of the need for the propitiation of the dyadic antithesis in the community: "The dyad represents both the first social synthesis and unification, and the first separation and antithesis. The appearance of the third party indicates transition, conciliation, and abandonment of absolute contrast" (Wolff 145). According to this perspective, the existence of a third element in every dyadic system functions as the catalyst for its counterbalance and equilibrium. No wonder why some researchers have proposed the term 'third sex' as an alternative for nonnormative subjectivities and sexualities causing heated debates.

The term ‘third sex’ has been historically attributed to the 19th theorist of homosexuality Karl Urlichs, who associated hermaphroditism with homosexuality. He identified individuals who had same-sex desires, or those who were born hermaphrodites with the third sex. Mark Hirschfeld further proposed an open-ended schema of sexual distribution which derived from the deconstruction of the sexual binary based on the fact that all embryonic life starts off on an undifferentiated level. The four types of his schema included the genital, the somatic, the psychic and the psychosexual type all of which he named “sexual intermediaries” (97). The distinction among these types was based on variations in sex organs, secondary sex characteristics, sexual desire, and psychosocial characteristics. Hirschfeld’s groundbreaking concept was the outcome of a fight against the oppression of those who did not fit into the traditionally binary sex/gender system, and this was only possible by acknowledging the unique intersexed configuration of every individual (Bauer 159). The destabilization of the sex binary through the hypostatization of a third sex can account for cases of intersexuality but I consider it to be another method of classification and hence control. Anyhow, it would take years of controversial discourse to reach an agreement on who is to be classified into a third sex category and again questions might be raised about the matching gender of the third sex.

Some scholars suggest that this cross-disciplinary discourse does not aim at the emergence of a third sex that would encompass all sexual identities. Rather, it can indicate to a third space which would allow for the possibility of multiple categories of identities. For instance, Garber discusses the possibility of the ‘third’ not as a new identification model but as a channel where ‘otherness’ is possible. She highlights that “the ‘third term’ is *not* a *term*. Much less is it a sex, certainly not an instantiated ‘blurred’ sex as signified by a term like ‘androgyn’ or ‘hermaphrodite’: “The ‘third’ is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility” (Garber 11). The rejection of the concept of the third sex does not equal

the rejection of a third space as what the term ‘third sex’ does, is to reiterate the stereotypic notion of mandatory sex assignment. On the contrary, the thirdness, being perceived as a third space of existence, can function as an umbrella term to cover a range of sexual variations that appear in human sexuality.

Holmes, on the other hand, criticizes the term ‘thirdness’ because it perpetuates and emphasizes the binary sex categorization: “[M]any ethnographers still think along a dimorphic axis, permitting the occasional disruption to be entertained, but not actually considering that the so-called 'third' might be a 'first' or even one of any of a multiplicity of possible sex categories” (Locating Third Sexes 5). She treads carefully on anthropological findings about thirdness since these can idealize and regard some cultures superior to others. It appears that further categories could also harm the intentions of intersex advocacy groups and render intersex autonomy an illusion.

Anthropological studies have pointed out that gender roles are based on societal relations that are subject to change and, thus, should not be taken for granted. The Western bigender context is not a one-way road; it is evident that there are other perspectives of identity too. Challenging the long-established notions of gender dualism is one possible way of revealing a space of expression for other possibilities, under which all the gendered variations of the sexual continuum can be encompassed. The common idea that molded a solid ground of cultural predestination of the two sex classifications and prevailed even until the twentieth century was based on essentialist theories and biological determinism and later on social constructionism. Since a person with an intersex condition is neither male nor female but intersex, which gender can be attributed to him/her in a bigender identity system? Looking for an answer to this question pushes towards the reevaluation of the traditional gender binary and the need for a diverse approach.

3.6.2 An Anthropological Approach: Non-Western Gender Variance

Another scientific approach that was concerned with the intersex example and tried to provide answers to the perpetual questions about their identity was the anthropological one. During the twentieth century anthropologists who advocated for the existence of more than the two distinct sexes, attempted to examine non-Western cultures that promoted a concession beyond the dimorphic sexual model based on fieldwork. This research led to the realization that, on one hand, there were various cultures around the world that acknowledged sex and gender variant people in many ways and that, on the other hand, sexual perception in the West had been dogmatized through religious and social misconceptions about heteronormative hegemony. Findings of this ethnological/anthropological research contributed not only to the challenge of the totalistic heteronormative discourse, but also to the disintegration of the binary sex/gender system: "Various symbolic organizations of non-Western societies [...] have been used to demonstrate that Western conceptualizations of sex and gender do not represent a universal and obvious biological fact" (M. Holmes, Critical Intersex 65). How to think about gender has been shaped by the power of classification in our gender-polarizing society, as Foucault has powerfully proven. However, there are examples of gender variant cultures that shatter the illusion of the universality of sex/gender dualism and provoke ways of thinking or ethos and practices of the self, in Foucauldian terms, that allow us to make sense of the hierarchies with "as little domination as possible" (Foucault, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth 298). What follows is a report of non-Western cultures that face sex and gender variant people in a rather different way than they are treated in the Euro American population.

In the modern world, studies have revealed that there are cultures that acknowledge the existence of a third sex. According to Greenberg's study *Defining Male and Female: Intersexuality and the Collision between Law and Biology*, there is ample evidence of cases

of intersexuality in the Dominican Republic, in Papua New Guinea, in India and among tribes of Native American people (53-55). These cultures have given various names to their intersex people and treat them with respect. In an effort to interpret the attitude of different cultures towards people who lived on the boundaries of typical femaleness and maleness, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz compared the ways intersex people were depicted in the Navajo and Pokot tribes in America. In contrast to the Navajo, where "[t]he polymorphous culture of the Navajo seems to have achieved a remarkable zenith in its cultural praise of the blessed hermaphrodite" (G. Herdt 444), and the Pokot, where they were considered to be dysfunctional but not monstrous, in American society, intersex people were considered an anomaly: "[T]he Americans . . . apparently regard femaleness and maleness as exhausting the natural categories in which persons can conceivably come: what falls between is a darkness, an offense against reason" (Geertz 85). Anthropological research concluded that non-Western cultures do not take the correlation between sex and gender for granted as Western cultures do, so "[a]nthropologists have contributed to the notion that how we apprehend sex is shaped by cultural, symbolic and structural features" (L. Eckert 7). Anthropologists' contribution to the studies of the intersex did pave the way for early intersex intelligibility by presenting the non-Western cultures' interpretation and perception of intersex people as a social construction.

There are many examples of non-Western cultures that recognize people who live in between the binary gender boundaries. They are called guevedoche in the Dominican Republic, hijra in India, and berdache in North America. As is exemplified in the anthropological studies that refer to these cultures, not all of these populations were born intersex. Some are born in a distinct sex but later in life occupy fluid gender roles; roles that would be incomprehensible in the sexually dimorphic Western world.

One example of a cultural system that is classified in a three-sex-code is found in the Dominican Republic. The locals identify the condition as ‘guevedoche’, which means penis at twelve. Medically the condition is called steroid 5-alpha reductase deficiency which impairs the metabolism of testosterone to DHT. DHT is the hormone responsible for the masculinization of external genitalia. These individuals are sexually ambiguous at birth and at puberty experience masculinization which is seen in hair growth, deepening of the voice and penile erections. This is the same condition Callie in Eugenides’ *Middlesex* studied in this thesis is found to have during puberty. In his study of the guevedoches Herdt concludes that the recognition of a third sex category by the village ontology “defies Western sexual dimorphism, complies with a three-sex cultural code and criticizes the Western scientific model of sexuality” (G. Herdt, Mistaken Sex: Culture, Biology and the Third Sex in New Guinea 428). The guevedoches are intelligible people who are validated and accepted within their culture the way they were born.

The berdaches of North America occupied social and work roles of a diverse gender, resembling neither a man nor a woman distinctively. They were believed to have supernatural powers, usually formed sexual relations with people of the same sex and most often adopted some form of cross-dressing. Berdaches were considered to be members of a distinct gender, so the North American tribes were stratified into four genders: men, women, male berdaches and female berdaches. Their gender difference earned them respect from the other members of the tribe and their existence has come to be considered as evidence of the multidimensional gender diversity.

The hijras from India are men who take up women’s social role and dress code and have also been named ‘eunuchs’ because some might undergo castration or ‘hermaphrodites’ because they occupy an androgynous role. At weddings and births, hijras are invited as mediators for the blessings of the goddess of fertility since they are believed to be spiritual

devotees of the goddess Bachuhara Mata. Herdt mentions that "*hijras* also engage in prostitution with men, although this directly contradicts their culturally sanctioned ritual roles" (373). In India hijras are recognized as neither male nor female. Nevertheless, they embrace a constructed intersex identity, and they are estimated around one million (Jhally 3).

According to Roscoe, the existence of these sex and gender variant cultures accentuates the influence of social constructionism because it provides evidence that sex and gender can appear in more forms than the hegemonic two sex/gender split that has prevailed in the Euro American society (Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America). At the same time, this gender fluctuation among North American tribes challenges the ideas about essentialist gender ideology and adverts to the possible failing of social constructionism and essentialism to interpret all the universal features of human society. Since gender is determined by natural sex and since there are two sexes there should only be two genders whatsoever. This one-dimensional proposition is doubted not only by intersexuality but also by the gender variance of the non-Western tribes and hints towards the need for a postgender analytical tool. Roscoe underlines this need when he suggests that the "multiple gender paradigm takes the original insight underlying the sex/gender distinction, that biology is not destiny . . . to the next logical level - the analysis of sex itself as a social construction" and that biology is also a discourse following an anti-essentialist premise (Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America 126). In any case, the study of the medical management of intersexuality stresses the importance of culturally prescribing one of the two sexes to an intersex infant as seen in this chapter. What perhaps the anthropological analysis of the gender-variant cultures strongly signifies too, is that there is no need for the existence of a correspondence between two sexes and two genders and a non-dichotomous sex/gender cultural system would be more comprehensive of the human nature. Nevertheless, it seems

that one cannot draw the conclusion that the existence of the abovementioned gender-variant cultures accounts for a gender-fluid continuum necessary for the intersex intelligibility.

Recent evidence in anthropological study is rather insufficient, one may say, as far as the deconstruction of the binary gender model is concerned. Shostak additionally contends that inhabiting a space of hybridity, or that of a third space, demonstrates the exact "impossibility of a 'third space' except in utopian fantasy" (386). In this sense, if intersex were to claim hybridity it would only serve to perpetuate memories of monstrosity experienced by intersex individuals in the past. Above and foremost, many intersex organizations, among others ISNA, have stressed out that intersex individuals rarely identify as a third gender or even as queer, as mentioned previously. As a result, the implication that intersex might claim a third gender may be read as ignoring or defying intersex individuals' gendered identities by suggesting that intersex people cannot identify as either men or women; instead, they are something other than that (Herndon). One should also not forget that the establishment of a third social grouping in non-Western countries might be possible as these groups of people have been present in their cultures for centuries. In Western countries, especially Christian ones, where cultures are not familiar with third gender categories historically, something like that might not be easily introduced.

3.6.3 Postgender and Body Essentialism: A Way Out

Endless tensions between the essentialist and constructionist views in gender studies continue to highlight the compelling weight the category of gender carries with it and raise questions about the meaningfulness of this controversy. Lately there has been an effort to reconceptualize the notion of gender and put it under a different perspective that might represent a clear departure from the aforementioned tension. It seems that this debate reaches its limits when identity politics are confronted with intersex. These shifting discourses might

be helpful to understand the complexity of intersexuality and provide an alternative framework as a novel system of meaning. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet draw the inference because "we put a good deal of work into emphasizing, producing, and enforcing the dichotomous categories of male and female, … [and] differences or similarities that blur the edges of these categories, or that might even constitute other potential categories, are backgrounded, or *erased*" (Language and Gender 13). Likewise, Delphy suggested, as early as 1993, that a nongender approach would also prove to be a viable option to interpret the human landscape: "Perhaps we shall only really be able to think about gender on the day when we can imagine nongender" (5). Above all, biology has proved that there are individuals who do not fit the stringent standards of male and female dichotomy and these individuals could be the key for a postgender approach which is here examined in a critical combination with Jansen's notion of body essentialism.

Dvorsky and Hughes, who both belong to the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, have written a white paper bringing forward their idea of a postgender human potential: "Postgenderism is a radical interpretation of the feminist critique of patriarchy and gender, and the genderqueer critique of the way that binary gender constrains individual potential and our capacity to communicate with and understand other people" (3). The proliferation of sex and gender categories in the turn of the twenty-first century and the study of intersexuality has shown that "[c]hromosome sex may not coincide with expected internal or external anatomical features, nor may these coincide with sex/gender identification, nor may this identification be set permanently in the life of the individual, nor may any of these cooperate with moral expectations of heterosexual object desires" (D. J. Hester 218). All these new possibilities provoke a social reimagination where gender would not be the foundation for normative issues or assumptions. Postgenderism defies the performativity of gender which sees the body as a passive site upon which cultural forces set a play. At the

same time, postgenderism turns the focus away from essentialism and social constructionism, both of which have been used as underlying theoretical backgrounds for an intersex analysis and calls for an alternative approach: “Postgenderism transcends essentialism and social constructionism by asserting that both freedom from gender will require both social reform and biotechnology” (Dvorsky and Hughes 13). Which all lead to the assertion that despite the scientific differences between the sexes, a gender binary excludes heteronormative personhoods from the human realm.

In the realm of the third wave feminism, a society where gender will not prevail has been proclaimed. In her attempt to prove that transgenderism perpetuates another aspect of male domination, Jeffreys opines that “[g]ender functions as an ideological system that justifies and organizes women’s subordination and for this reason it must be dismantled” (185). Hence, she suggests, that the future lies where ‘the edifice of gender’ will not guide cultural functions as radical feminism recognizes gender as a hierarchy (44). Furthermore, she adds that gender manifests a hierarchical structure developed by sexologists, such as John Money, for the management of intersexuality and led to the appropriation of intersex children who would act out on acceptably heterosexual ways. Shifting the attention away from gender can empower the idea that “gender is a multidimensional cultural category that presumes sexed personhood but is not limited to sex or sex-specific traits” (Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America 127). This is one of the mediocre views of radical feminism that can be helpful for the intersex case. If gender multidimensionality is possible, then intersex self-determination might become a feasible substantiality because sex will not have to be applied to one corresponding gender.

Hausman supplies a further argument reinforcing the importance of gender in relation to the medical management of the intersex. In the context of transsexualism, gender has to manifest not only physical sex but also the sexed identity that one experiences: “‘Gender’

was first introduced into medical discourse to signify the social performance indicative of an internal sexed identity" (7) . And not only does gender exemplify the power of the surgically medical technology in transsexualism but it also "eradicates intersexuality as a 'natural' variation of the body's representation of sex" (77). Commenting on the powerful protocols of intersex management created by John Money, Hausman suggests that Money's establishment of the term 'gender role' gave prominence to the difference between sex and gender whereby "those subjects unable to represent a sex 'authentically' could simulate one through adequate performances of gender that would fix one's identity irrevocably in a sex category" (107). As a result, gender displaced the focus from the physiological essential differences of the sexes to the socio-psychological field where medical power was authorized to come into operation. Hausman propels her eschewal of the regulative notion of gender using Barthes' mythic sign interpretation as an analytic tool for the construction of gender. She maintains that "as a myth, gender depends upon a history that is erased in the process of signification and a meaning that is naturalized in the moment of its elaboration" (190) and proposes as a way out of the normalization of gender, the critical return to 'sex'. Although Hausman's main criticism steers to the transsexual's adoption of extreme gender stereotypes and the perpetuation of the gender binary, her arguments resonate with the transgression of gender dimorphism and the concept of body essentialism.

Butler's early attempt in *Gender Trouble* was to deconstruct the idea of gender in stressing that gender intelligibility is grounded on the 'heterosexual matrix' and that the proliferation of gender identities, through their performativity and repetition, can lead to the subversion of the sex/gender binary. The sex/gender interdependence has come to create a kind of polarity between extremes which can cause conflict among same sex people as well: "The aspects of a gendered identity which one person deems to be positive will equally act to oppress another member of the same sex, who would be unrepresented by such a definition"

(Gillett 77). Why this polarity has been strengthened over the years is a matter of politics and the context it has been accommodating. Nonetheless, one of Butler's later work, *Bodies that Matter*, reveals an approach towards embodiment with a focus on materiality using the body as "the irreducible point of departure" (4) which can be used productively for the intersex case. She concedes that "the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means" (xvii) which, through a set of foreclosures, produces human and inhuman subjects. Yet, in a later interview Butler retreated from the absolutist notion about the social construction of the subject and her theory of performativity and has admitted that there are other factors that contribute to the constitution of the self (Bell 170). Her focus, however, on the materiality of the body and sex itself creates space for the intersex identity and its essential nature which leads to the departure from the problematic gender matrix.

In *Queer Post-Gender Ethics: The Shape of Selves to Come* Lucy Nicholas reconsiders the omnirelevance of binarism which indicates that the notions of sex/gender make sense and are definable only when considered with one another. She further understands the new potentiality through the deconstruction of gender binarism and the reconstruction of a queer postgender ontology. Her concern is to provide the strategies that will preserve a "commitment to inexhaustibility" which are enabled with a postgender approach to understanding the subjectivities that resist 'gendering' (156). A new postgender ontology will not only liberalize gender variant people but could also be the means towards the elimination of gender hierarchy altogether. Accordingly, Cornwall insists that the vast number of invisible intersex conditions highlights the uncertainty of the categorization of the bodily sexes: "The existence of 'invisible' intersex conditions, and the fact that it is not always clear how a given body should be classified, may demonstrate that all bodily sexes are already less certain than we credit" (381). Rethinking the current ways of bodily

classifications based on assumptions can bring about a meaningful schema for intersex intelligibility.

More often than not postgender is relevant and connected to transhumanism. But my reading of postgenderism as a way to understand intersexuality and erase the sex/gender totalitarian effect on subjectivities puts transhumanism at a distance because technology and science have already tried to manage the intersex body with quite unsuccessful outcomes. Cloning technologies and artificial wombs would not facilitate the understanding of intersex and would not essentially promote the main goal of intersex activism which is self-determination of their body. Rather, a pattern of sexual development where males, females and intersex individuals are included would be more meaningful.

Body essentialism provides a theoretical framework for intersex and refrains from mind essentialism which is used as a theoretical tool mainly by queer politics in support of their identity. Body essentialism understands that identity is formed by a pre-given body (Jansen) and that the unnegotiable body eschews domination by cultural norms of gender. It is a theoretical framework which leaves the constructionist sense of subjectivity behind and is applicable to gender studies to make intersex meaningful. It bears affinities with notions for a return to the body itself and the truth that it bears because intersex "is a genuinely material concept" (Jansen 127) and it "desire[s] a restoration to the 'essential', indeterminate intersexed body, the one that existed prior to 'correction' through surgery and hormones" (S. S. Turner, Intersex Identities: Locating New Intersections of Sex and Gender 459). Body essentialism points out that there is no need to fabricate sexual differences as this difference is already there. As Callie has put it in *Middlesex*, the final novel of this dissertation, "[d]esire made me cross over to the other side, desire and the facticity of my body" (479), or as Max in *Golden Boy* comments about the essentialist notion of intersex: "I am whole, whatever that means and does not mean; I am complete without the need for additions or alteration" (406).

Grosz makes the same point by saying that intersex people are "concrete, determinate, specific in their morphologies" (236) and they are a reality which should be recognized as it is. Cornwall affirms the importance of body essentialism by contending that "it matters that each person is sexed, for sexedness is part of the specificity of human being; it matters less *how* a given person is sexed, for sex is not the quality in which personhood most fundamentally resides" (379). In this sense, gender identity and self-understanding are not intelligible only in a certain way. As a result, the conceptualization of intersex as an essentiality and not a construction of the body lays the groundwork for intersex intelligibility and the claim for a material sex.

Intersex provides an opportunity to escape the never-ending anxiety between the essential/or socially constructive nature of subjects. As such, my understanding of intersex is read in a critical context where it is not open to negotiations and appropriations of cultural norms, and it designates the failure of the discursive process overall. This critical context is employed by the approaches of body essentialism and postgenderism that could be a leeway to intersex intelligibility. My characterization of this modality of intersex resonates with the concepts of postgenderism and body essentialism because, as I see it, these concepts provide new space for intersex Bildung which will be displayed in the next chapters where I will evaluate six novels with intersex representations through the lens of the contemporary Bildungsroman.

The structural backbone of the six novels with intersex characters are presented in the next part of my analysis. I argue that the literary representations of intersex subjects follow a trajectory that is mostly common in all the novels. A reimagination of an intersex life is presented following some of the most prevalent features of the traditional Bildungsroman. The hero grows from a naïve, hopeful child into a mature young adult who is faced with the reality of an intersex identity in a hostile social environment. The storyline is structured on a

hard-won maturity of the protagonist who is always at odds with his/her family. The culmination comes in the form of multiple epiphanies during which the protagonist experiences alienation and self-loathing, mainly due to a mandatory medical gender assignment, and eventually comes to a resolution which forms the development of the protagonist. Closure in the novels is conceived twofold: either in the form of the protagonist's assimilation into the hegemonic power, or in the form of the protagonist's defiance of the normalization process and acceptance of a life in-between the two sexes as an intersex.

In my analysis of the six novels, I focus on the different ways the intersex identity is constructed for the Bildungsroman heroes in the narrations. Although the concepts I am studying, for example, invisibility, motherhood, agency, the medicalization of the body, myths and rebirth, stigma, and corporeality, are different for each novel, they all connect with each other and lead back to the construction of the protagonists' intersex identity.

4 KATHLEEN WINTER'S *ANNABEL*

> I wouldn't call what you have a disorder. I'd call it a different order. A different order means a whole new way of being. It could be fantastic. It could be overwhelmingly beautiful, if people weren't scared
>
> − Kathleen Winter, *Annabel*

Annabel is the story of Wayne, a young teenager, who gradually and through processes of alienation from the world and from himself, develops from a young boy into an intersex adult. The novel was written in 2010 by Kathleen Winter and it depicts the story of young Wayne, who was born intersex in the 1970s, but at birth his parents, Jacinta, and Treadway Blake, decided to raise him as a boy without letting him know. Although his mother was uncertain about the sex reassignment operation, Treadway insisted on the surgery that Wayne underwent when he was still an infant. Annabel is the name his mother's best friend, Thomasina, gives him and calls him when they are alone as it reminds her of her own lost girl child. Treadway puts great effort in introducing Wayne into a masculine world from a very early age by teaching him manual work, men's sports and hobbies and taking him on his trapline. However, whenever Wayne is away from his father's prying eyes, he exhibits feminine behavior and is keen on interests such as synchronized swimming and dancing while at the same time he enjoys spending time with his best friend Wally Michelin. The plot culminates when at the age of twelve, because of a medical emergency, Wayne's abdomen is discovered to be filled with menstrual blood and his true identity is revealed to him. His first adult years find him estranged in a bigger city, where he decides to quit taking the masculine hormones that he had been taking from birth and let his body grow into the person he was actually born, an intersex. Besides depicting the development of intersex Bildung, *Annabel* is

also a Bildungsroman that resembles the apprenticeship novel as Wayne explores his inclinations while growing up and ultimately cultivates his talents which leads him to pursue his dream of studying architecture, a decision that brings him closer to his artistic self.

4.1 DISABILITY, INVISIBILITY AND THE INTERSEX BODY

Although my theoretical background has been greatly determined by body-essentialist and postgender approaches (see Dvorsky and Hughes; Grosz; Jansen; Nicholas; Hausmann; Delphy) it would seem irresponsible to deny the fact that intersex representations frequently attain relateable meanings and are re/defined through the lens of disability studies. In this part of my study I will explore the processes of how the intersex identity is marked as disabled in *Annabel*, and how intersex and disability operate in the Bildungsroman leading to the stigmatization of the intersex body which, despite its paralyzation by biomedical, legal and historical violence, is empowered to destabilize the same power systems of hegemony that want to mark it (Chemers). Building on Ahmed's argument that the role of the body is that of a meaning maker as its perception depends on how we, or society in general, is oriented towards it (Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others), it becomes clear that the intersex body challenges multiple modes of intelligibility and can even be conflated with disability theories. Intersex as a disorder/disability can be understood in two ways: Firstly, according to the 2006 DSD nomenclature, intersex is described as a sex disorder; one that is discursively essentialized by medical and political power justifying, thus, medical interventions on the intersex body since intersex is a "congenital bodily variation that spectacularly violate[s] sacred ideologies of Western culture" (Garland-Thomson 13). And secondly, intersex can fall under the broad category of disabilities because many intersex people, following a sex reassignment surgery, are un-/disable to participate in the pleasure economy (Foucault, The History of Sexuality; Shildrick). Besides, intersex activists have, in

many instances, allied with disability organizations not only because intersex is culturally linked to disabilities/disorders, but also to ensure the promotion of their legal rights as a minority. Carpenter suggests that the WHO definition of disability applies to intersex "in that the medical profession regards intersex people as having an impairment ("disorder") in body function or structure, a 'disorder of sex development' and because, similar to people with disabilities, "[i]ntersex people are medicalised, stigmatised and suffer discrimination due to our [intersex people's] distinctive biological characteristics" (Carpenter, Intersex intersectionalities with disability 125). Yet, in Chapter Three I have mentioned that many intersex activists denounce the DSD nomenclature and consequently distance from the debate around intersex and so the connection with disability theories is vehemently maintained (Wilkerson). However, although I have adopted a body essentializing perspective regarding intersex, the cultural consequences of an intersex life should not be utterly abated. These consequences bear resemblances to a life with disability if legal, linguistic, and material ramifications in daily-life interactions are taken into consideration. Historically, body heterogeneity is, after all, under duress in ableist and interphobic cultural systems.

In his *Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence*, McRuer conflates the dynamic relation between disability and able-bodiedness with the one between queer and heterosexuality as both disabled and queer identities are empowered by hegemonic notions of identity. He points out that compulsory able-bodied and compulsory heterosexual hegemony depend on the disabled and queer body for the reiteration of an imposing 'normality'. Although the idea that intersexuality conflates with queerness has been spurned by intersex activists, I acknowledge the fact that "the experience of the able-bodied need for an agreed-on common ground" (McRuer 92), because the resolutions that compulsory able-bodiedness and compulsory heterosexuality offer us are inadequate. As the intersex body fails to perform the compulsory sex/gender binary, I am here suggesting that there is an analogy between the

disabled and the intersex body in that they both contest hegemonic identities and exacerbate "the crisis of authority" (McRuer 97).

Many have discussed the interrelation between the disabled and the intersex body. Koyama outlines the overlaps that exist between the two groups of people and highlights the fact that intersex activism could greatly benefit from the disabilities rights movement: "[D]isability is not simply a characteristic of one's body, but the product of social institutions that divide human bodies into normal and abnormal, privileging certain bodies over others" (15). Similarly, she playfully twists Esther Morris', an intersex activist, autobiographical remarks about the dominant culture to condemn the medical establishment of intersex management: "'Not having a vagina was not my problem; having to get one was', can be paraphrased to say not having a vagina was not a disability; the social expectation that dictated that she needed to get one in order to live a happy and productive life marked her body disabled" (18). In the same line, Orr acknowledges the effects of medical interventions as "processes of compulsory dyadism and able-bodiedness" (56) reading the management of the intersex body in conjuncture with disability studies.

Among the first instances which declare Wayne's intersex identity as abnormal and his body as unable to perform its gender-essential functions comes up right after his birth when Dr. Ho suggests that a phallometer should be used to define Wayne's sex. The phallometer, an object that measures and assesses an infant's phallus, is immediately used to determine Wayne's gender as Dr. Ho declares that "[t]his baby can be raised as male" (Annabel 52). Jacinta, who is suspicious of his methods, sums up the construction of a gendered identity revealing society's reliance on clear cut categories that label the intersex body as abnormal and/or disabled and/or less natural: "'You think,' she said, 'a child's sex needs to be believable. You think my child – the way he is now, the way she is – unbelievable? Like something in a science fiction horror movie? And you want to make her

believable. Like a real human.'" (50). Jacinta's words echo practices of the past where the popularization of the hermaphrodite body was mediated through its traumatizing association with mythological creatures. Yet, myth used as a cognitive tool will be extensively discussed in Chapter Nine. The relegation of the normative body through medical interventions leads to techniques of normalization that resonate with the loss of autonomy of the patient revealed both in disability and intersex studies. Pagonis points out that "[w]e have yet to reach a pivotal point where doctors are willing to stop playing God, and instead, let intersex people decide how we would like to live our destinies" (47). Agency in the intersex Bildungsroman is a recurrent concept that will be analyzed in detail in Chapter Seven. In *Annabel*, Wayne's body is treated in accordance with an aesthetics of acceptable body types, an approach that guides the medical treatment of the disabled body as well.

Throughout the novel, Wayne questions his corporeal identity associating it with the diseased, and/or the Other, and/or the disabled. The transition from innocence to a state of doubt over his medical treatment happens at the age of twelve, when Wayne wants definite answers about why he has to take medications and inject himself with hormones. Twelve is the 'age of reason' as Thomasina explains to Wayne: "Twelve is when you wake up and you look around you and you understand things" (204). This comment seems like a narrative technique used to explain the complexity of Wayne's psychological dismay and the need to take control over his own body. He asks Jacinta three consecutive answers in an effort to make sense of his condition: "'Am I a diabetic?' . . . 'Do I have leukemia?' . . . 'Do I have brain tumour?'" (151). Needless to say, that the interrelation between Wayne's condition and disease evokes the cultural underpinnings of the problematic medical treatment of the intersex body. Further questions that remain unanswered are also directed to Thomasina when moments before his intersex identity is revealed to him by Dr. Lioukras, he asks her: "Am I weird?" (199). Wayne's constant questions pinpoint to the true identity he is looking

for. However, is this true identity recognized through the cultural norm that perpetuates dichotomies between the able and the disabled/unable body? Perhaps the narrative raises the problematic question of identifying intersex as something unintelligible in itself since it reinforces notions of monstrosity that were used in the past in order to make intersex intelligible. Wayne's questions lead the way towards making intersex intelligible through a narrative of the diseased or the disabled that would justify in his mind the need for medical regulation.

The process of disabling the intersex body or analyzing it within a disability/crip framework is what sets Wayne, the Bildungshero, in motion. Wayne departs from the closely protected home environment into the wilderness of St. John's where he will be alone and vulnerable, but it is in this space of exploration where Wayne will re/discover his/her intersex identity. When Wayne decides to let his body 'work' on its own off medication during the time he moves out of his parents' house, his father gives him fair warning about how his appearance would change and how the others would respond to this change. Wayne, highly confident about his choice, reassures him by having already found a solution: "If I start to look too strange, I can work after the sun goes down. I can walk up people's driveways at dusk and put up my hood and wear a big jacket and no one has to notice" (354). There is an evident link between life as an intersex and life in the dark, in obscurity, signaling a compromise of Wayne's identity in order to fit in or to become intelligible.

A discussion of intersex sexuality is significant for my textual analysis in this part of my study not only because the intersex and the disabled have often been connected to asexuality but because as Graham writes in her *A History of the Bildungsroman*, "the Bildungsroman remains a valid form for exploring sexuality and repudiating oppression" (140). Wayne's sexuality is not clarified in the novel as the only part where sexual arousal is mentioned is when Wayne looks himself in the mirror. Is this because, in a cultural context,

sexuality is reserved only for heteronormativity? Colligan explains that "medical and cultural assumptions about sex being reserved for heterosexed, symmetrical, and genitally specific bodies tend to promote the expectation that sex and sexuality are privileges awarded to the 'normate' only" (50) and that the "desexualization of both disabled and intersex people is a function of their attempted social 'rehabilitation', the assimilation or restoration into given social norms" (49). Drawing on her remark about the rehabilitation and restoration of the intersex into social norms, I assume that Wayne's pregnancy is an attempt by Winter to reconcile the conflicting images of intersexuality. Nevertheless, self-impregnation, which is physiologically impossible for the intersex body, reasserts notions of intersex unintelligibility. Fausto Sterling comments that "[a]lthough in theory it might be possible for a true hermaphrodite to become both father and mother to a child, in practice the appropriate ducts and tubes are not configured so that egg and sperm can meet" (22). As a result, Wayne's self-fertilization, functions as a subplot only to attract the sensational atmosphere in the novel (Lowrey).

But as positioning intersex within the queer framework bears multiple drawbacks, seeing intersex as a disability might cause clashes between the two groups which are essentially not identical categories. In *Annabel*, Wayne experiences his condition as 'unnatural' only in social interactions where the intersex identity is socially constructed and interpreted. Here, the theoretical framework of my analysis takes yet another important role, namely the projection of queer within intersex and the retreat from the concept of gender whatsoever, within a postgender perspective. What *Annabel* clearly materializes is the fact that intersex intensifies what I have earlier mentioned as a critical return to sex. That is because the conceptualization of intersex as essential and not as a construct claims the need for a material sex. In the end, Wayne affirms this need by opting for an intersex subjecthood in the finale of the narrative.

Another approach I am attempting here is to explore the idea of invisibility in connection to the intersex body. Dreger has suggested that the social construction of the categories of male, female and hermaphrodite has historically led to the objectification and disappearance of the intersex body. Following this suggestion, I find that Wayne occupies a space of invisibility profoundly saturated with questions of normality and disability. I have focused on the engagement of intersex with disability studies previously in this chapter as it seems that both challenge conventional notions of normativity. During one of the many visits to the hospital, Wayne sees a sign on the receptionist's cage that reads, "Please tell us if you leave without being seen" and he is confused about its meaning (153). While he contemplates about the invisible people that may come to the hospital, he asks Jacinta how it is possible to be unseen by others. This scene can be read as an instance of reclaiming visibility for the intersex as in order "to become intelligible to the cultural matrix, they have to become invisible to themselves" (Neuhaus 127). Invisibility is often translated as powerlessness and helplessness where the individual feels that he/she has no control over a specific situation. It is this exact feeling of vulnerability Wayne experiences as Dr. Carr explains the interventions he should undergo: "Wayne listened to all of this and 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" (370). It can be assumed that the practice of gender assignment in intersex infants is a practice of restoring their intelligibility. When the doctors persuaded Treadway and Jacinta to put their baby on the operating table, he claimed that he is performing the surgery in order to "create a believable masculine anatomy" (48). The choice of the word 'believable' reveals the doctor's attempt to create an identity that will become visibly authentic confirming Cornwall's assertion that "intersex's frequent cultural 'unspeakability' exacerbates its characterization as alien, other and pathological" (372). Nevertheless, as Wayne's body is developing through

puberty it seems that its visibility is becoming more and more obscure and that it is, yet again, turning into a site of inhibiting disorientation, in Ahmed's words.

Drawing, once again, on the work of Sara Ahmed, who perceives everything we see dependent on how we are oriented and reflects on how orientation determines the way we inhabit space (2006), I argue that phenomenology informs Wayne's in-/visibility in Labrador and his experiences as an intersex too. Wayne insists on learning the name of his condition since his parents have chosen to keep his intersex condition a secret from him. "Is what I have called something?" (154) is the question Wayne continuously asks his mother whenever they visit the doctor for additional examinations. The process of naming his condition and, thereby, un-objectifying his body accounts for an attempt to recreate a lived embodiment of Wayne's identity and to connect the fractured part of his selfhood: "Framing represents the active engagement with or attempt to reshape a discourse through changing codes, or terminology" (Davidson 66). Wayne's constant medical treatments that are necessary to sustain male growth and his ignorance about his body have led to his objectification in the hands of the specialists supported by their hostile gaze. Hence, since orientations "shape what becomes socially as well as bodily given" (S. Ahmed 158), Wayne's disorientation is followed by his inability to create connections to the real world. Wayne is unsure about his looks as "[h]e still did not know how he appeared" (414), and embraces a disoriented appearance in an effort to render his intersex experience in definite and material terms. He fixates his eyes on the sight and realizes that he might be one of the invisible patients as doctors look beyond his body trying to redirect it into an either/or position, bringing it "upright, straight, and in line" (S. Ahmed 159). Wayne's body surely does not adhere to the codes of a bigender system, and he is constantly forced back into it until the moment he realizes that he has control over the process of his own orientation.

However, the narrative sets up contradictory aspects of Wayne's identity even after his awakening moment when he attempts to live life as an intersex. In an experimental effort to look more feminine, or to come nearer to Annabel, Wayne dresses up in female clothes and lets a make-up artist spruce him up. Wayne's seemingly contradictory appearance reflects his inner sense of invisibility that characterizes his transition. Although a make-up artist has made him look feminine, he still doesn't know whether "he look[ed] like Annabel . . . or like Wayne" (414), a feeling that reflects his inability to escape or evade his past. He once again becomes aware of his invisibility the moment he comes face to face with his past during a visit to a mall in St. John's when he suddenly sees his old school principal, Victoria Huskins. At this moment, Wayne's critical reflections on his aloneness and shamefulness reveal the "structural invisibility" (V. Turner 95) of his embodiment either as Wayne or as Annabel. He confesses that "[h]is aloneness was what made him feel ashamed, and he did not know why it had to be so" (414). His encounter with Victoria Huskins is an act of revelation and of maturity. Haunted by an imaginary version of who and how he 'should' look like, Wayne begins to realize how awkward he feels in this masqueraded version of himself. As soon as Victoria Huskins reminded him of his talent at drawing and wondered why he hadn't been studying at university, "[h]e began to feel as if his face was smothering under the paint" (419) and "[a]ll he knew was that he had to get to a sink and some water and wash the make-up off his face" (420). At this revelatory moment, Wayne experiences a moment of realization that transforms his identity development. Victoria Huskins reveals to him that she knew about his condition all along but there are other things in life that matter the most.

Even the narrative technique of the 'Wayne/Annabel' double naming may be interpreted as a reinforcement of rendering the intersex body invisible. It emphasizes the invisibility of the intersex character as he can never become a unity with a rigid gender and sexual identity. There are times when, especially in his father's eyes, he is a boy, and others

when he wants to inhabit a female body. When Thomasina looks at him, she realizes that "[h]e was Wayne, she saw now, and he was Annabel. He was both at the same time, but he did not know this" (172). The double embodiment of an intersex personhood is, according to Neuhaus, a mechanism that promotes their intelligibility within a given cultural matrix: "Their bodies are neither truly here nor there, leaving their personhood undone. *Dis*placed within their own bodies, their lived space is that of living as prisoners in their own body" (127). Thomasina goes back to calling Wayne Annabel after Wayne's first surgery when Dr. Lioukras revealed to him that he was a true hermaphrodite. He confesses that he likes being called 'Annabel' as it is a name "you would call a child you loved" (235).

Likewise, Wayne's recurrent dreams of him being a girl, not only reveal his gender dysphoria but also his profound need for an integrity between body and mind. In his dreams he becomes invisible as he hasn't been presented with an authentic way of being intersex: "I dreamed I was a girl . . . I was walking by a river. I tried to see my face in the river but I couldn't . . . While I was waking up I remembered I'm a boy, and I was surprised for a minute, until I remembered that's what I always am when I'm awake" (193). In his dreams, where he creates imaginary versions of personhood, conscious and subconscious thoughts coexist and become one. That's when he wishes he could become a ghost and live in another body: "If there was a way he could make himself into a ghost without a body – a shadow – or transparent like the lures his father used to catch the Arctic char, he would have done it" (99). Comparing himself to a lure only adds up to his sense of invisibility within the social context of his existence and concomitantly exemplifies him as a person living in between the clear cut limits of woman- and manhood.

The recurring images of a 'limbo', in-between state of Wayne's selfhood echo Turner's concepts of liminality and liminal personae, in other words 'threshold people'. He expands Van Gennep's idea of the 'liminal phase' of rites of passage to throw light upon

various social roles. Wayne emphasizes his liminality with the way he watches bridges and admires them as an architectural wonder. His love of bridges is even accentuated by the fact that he wishes he could live on a bridge. Life on a bridge only points to his feelings of in betweenness. According to Turner, liminal personae have broken their ties with the classification attributes of the cultural matrix they belong to: "[T]hese persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (95). Wayne can be seen as a liminal persona as he imagines a female selfhood, many times projected through his close friendship with Wally: "He would have transformed into his father's lure, slipped under Wally Michelin's divinely freckled skin, and lived inside her, looking through her eyes" (99). At other times, in search of his authentic self, Wayne either wishes he were one of the synchronized swimmers he adores on TV, or he senses Annabel, his female self, emerging from his own body: "But Annabel ran away. Where did she go? She was inside his body, but she escaped him. Maybe she gets out through my eyes, he thought, when I open them. Or my ears. He lay in bed and waited. Annabel was close enough to touch; she was himself, yet unattainable" (252).

4.2 SPACE, MOBILITY AND THE CHRONOTOPE

The impact of the external world, the text shows, is crucial to the intersex hero's concept of self. Buckley indicated that one of the principal elements of the Bildungsroman is provinciality which sets the hero in a confined environment from which he/she usually wants to be set free (Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding). Franco Moretti supported that space in literature played a significant role for the canonical European novel claiming that "*what* happens depends a lot on *where* it happens" (85). Bringing these two ideas together indicates to the poles of stasis and movement, where stasis is expressed through the oppressed provincial environment of the home and movement is signified

through the protagonist's quest for identity mostly in an urban unknown setting where the hero reaches a form of individualism. The separation from familial bonds and the movement from the provinces to the big city ignite the hero's process of Bildung. The transition from the provinces to an urban context is apparent in many Bildungsromane and in the intersex Bildungsroman it is even more crucial because of the classification of the city as an urban environment of liberalism and broader acceptance of the diverse.

All of Winter's characters seem to be looking for space for themselves, be it away or inside Labrador, the small town where the story is set. Wayne searches for a space where his intersex self can be possible. Thomasina travels around the world, away from the pain of her family's tragedy and sends postcards of bridges to Wayne that symbolize a hybrid space of in-betweenness as stated above. Jacinta, entrapped in her own guilt for rejecting her child's true identity, gradually shuts the world outside and remains isolated in the realm of her house that symbolizes a domestic space of depression. Treadway extends the time he spends on his trapline and spends more time outdoors, away from the house that he lived in. Wally goes on a quest of chasing her dream to become an opera singer even after the accident that traumatized her vocal cords irremediably.

Space and motion, as I have earlier mentioned, is multilateral and one of the most central elements in the intersex Bildungsroman. But how is space relevant in Wayne's story and what are the consequences of space in the development of the plot? As a response, I will focus on how the notion of space unfolds in the narrative and how Wayne's growth is affected by its manifold symbolism. Mobility is comprised not only of spatial movement from one place to another but also of an esoteric movement into oneself. The Bildungsroman hero senses that the movement is part of his/her own Bildung and developing a cognitive map of the world around him cannot take place in stasis. However, this does not necessarily mean that moving from the suburbs or the provinces into the city will eliminate all the obstacles

and provide the intersex body intelligibility within the social constraints of bigenderism. Fraiman argues that the movement "may bring the hero to terms or to blows with society" (126) and, in the end, render the journey an inescapable disillusion. In this respect, Wayne self-reflectively observes the limitations of the big city: "St. John's was all angles. It was corners and intersections and panes of glass, and every time he passed through one of its clearly defined spaces, he felt he did not fit into it. His body, or the idea of his body, had grown amorphous and huge" (356). By and large, the journey is an integral part of the maturation of the hero who needs to break away from his/her inescapable reality.

Wayne's journey toward adulthood begins once he leaves his home behind. Space unfolds in physical dimensions creating at times distance and intimacy for the protagonist and it is also a synonym for the invisibility that Wayne inhabits in order to be intelligible. "The physical shift", Felski claims, "can be central to the process of self-discovery" because a psychological shift of the hero cannot be successful without a physical shift of leaving behind a repressive environment (134). The spaces where Wayne's identity is gradually constructed do not only serve as settings for his life events, but also play a meaningful part in his personal growth enabling his autonomy and agency.

Another distinct feature that is present in each intersex Bildungsroman of my study and deserves special attention is the chronotope. Unlike the actual journey of the hero, which is still an intrinsic component of their character development, another juxtaposition of time and space is evident in the novels. The notion of the chronotope, a link between 'chronos' - time and 'topos'- space, was first introduced by Michael Bakhtin in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" where he defined it as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). For Bakhtin, the chronotope provides different configurations of time and space for each genre and functions as a tool for the spatial and temporal navigation of the narrative, in matters of a

historical setting or other narratological elements. Aside from the actual chronotope in the intersex Bildungsroman, there is another underlying chronotope where the intersex subject seems to shape his/her identity. It is the chronotope of an imaginary space and time where an intersex subjecthood is not criticized and does not have to be medically managed in order to fit in the cultural grid.

It is evident in all the novels of my analysis that the characters suffering from a society of silence, create a potential chronotope of their own, parallel to the actual time-space relationship present in the narrative. To put it differently, it seems that the intersex Bildungsroman is comprised of two chronotopes – the inner and the outer. Both interact between reality and imagination and also contribute concomitantly to the development of the character. The imaginary setting that the intersex character develops and feels comfortable in bears resemblance to the strategy of distance that is reported to be employed by non-binary gender people in conventional settings. More specifically, individuals whose identity does not conform to the gender binary tend to create barriers that cause a feeling of isolation and separateness in social interactions because they want to avoid being dismissed and devalued (Losty and O'Connor 13). Following this principle, the element of the inner chronotope hints at the necessity of the intersex to experience a reality where he/she can feel accepted and connected to a true sense of selfhood. In some novels, this imaginary setting takes the form of a second inner voice which divides the mind into two separate spheres: a male or female and an intersex one. The inner intersex voice calls into question the decisions of the individual and poses the overarching question of "What's wrong with me?".

4.3 THE MENTOR MOTIF

The mentor figure in the intersex Bildungsroman is assumed by characters whose lives portray alternativity in several ways: an open-minded doctor, a hippie-style relative, or a

progressive and encouraging adult who offers understanding for the intersex teenager's never-ending questions about his/her identity. The mentor, in this case, withstands traditional social conventions such as marriage and heteronormative behavior and suggests new ways of living and accepting nonconforming bodies, like the intersex ones.

The mentor figure serves as a facilitator throughout the story so that he/she can help the hero in their journey of personal growth and self-fulfillment. In the traditional Bildungsroman, a mentor/teacher is needed to offer guidance and advice to the young hero. Labovitz notices that every hero of the Bildungsroman is guided by a mentor (24) and, what is more, he models himself on the mentor's personality: "*Bildung* is aided by a role model and the male hero attempts to fashion his life after a model" (181). The mentor pattern takes a symbolic form mirroring the hero's inability to cope with social conformities and provides new possibilities for the young hero's impasses. In Winter's text the mentor trope functions as a narrative device and is deployed in order to accomplish the association of the hero's experiences with his social relations and the initiation of his self-knowledge.

Treadway influences Wayne's Bildung retrospectively as the typical father-son relationship attains a duplicitous nature. During the opening chapter, when Jacinta and Treadway are dismayed at the birth of their intersex baby, it seems that, the fact that Treadway is exercising his masculinity by making the hegemonic decision to raise the newborn as a boy, will ultimately result in his estrangement from his child. In line with medical authority, Treadway, a very pragmatic male, evokes several thematic patterns of the management of intersex bodies controlled by hierarchical power relations: "For if there was one thing Treadway Blake considered with every step, it was how a decision of his affected not just himself but everyone" (27). Allowing Wayne to identify as an intersex is a sign of unmanliness to Treadway: "It never occurred to Treadway to do the thing that lay in the hearts of Jacinta and Thomasina: to let his baby live the way it had been born. That, in his

mind, would not have been a decision. It would have been indecision, and it would have caused harm" (27). So, from a very early stage, Treadway starts imposing masculinizing strategies on Wayne taking him to "parts of the house that were men's parts" (68) and teaching him how to cut wood, hunt and fix things because "with this child Treadway did not want to take a chance" (68). By introducing Wayne into the hard world of men, and by perpetuating a normatively masculine behavior, Treadway, an archetypal figure of masculinity in the novel, attempts to inculcate hegemonic masculinity on his son in order to assert that "[h]egemony may be accomplished by the incorporation of such masculinities into a functioning gender order" (Connell and Messerschmidt 848). Nevertheless, his continuing efforts bring on the opposite result. Wayne is unable to go against his intersex nature but he yields to a conscious struggle of pretending to be the son his father has always wanted: "The child knew that a grim, matter-of-fact attitude was required of him by his father, and he learned how to exhibit such an attitude, and he did not mind it because it was the way things were, but it was not his authentic self" (71). After Wayne senses that he is not enough for his father, he silently withdraws away from him day by day.

The culmination of the tension between father and son is compellingly expressed in the chapter called 'Alto'. Once again, Treadway intervenes in his son's life as he believes that the bridge that Wayne and his best friend, Wally, had elegantly constructed and used as their special place, hampers his male development: "If Wayne dropped his habit of lolling around this bridge with that girl, Treadway told himself, he would enjoy the summer the way a boy should" (135). The dismantling of the bridge with a chainsaw is principally symbolic in nature, going far beyond a simple plot function. By indicating that the bridge, Wayne's safehouse, reiterates feminine norms, the novel reasserts notions about the performativity of gender, and is reminiscent of John Money's theories about the constructedness of gender norms and roles. As, in the text, the bridge has "become a symbol of Wayne's intersexuality,

and his fascination with bridges an expression of his desires" (Neuhaus 128), its destruction is Treadway's last effort to restore the expectations he has of his son. In a paternalistic attitude, Treadway silences Wayne's intersex identity while Jacinta perceives his action as "a kind of annihilation of some part of [her] own child's soul" (140). This action is interrelated with what Amato calls a "bodily dissociation in the interactions with other" that intersex individuals suffer because practices of "invisibility and social silencing render intersex bodies ghostlike, and an intersex subject position is problematized" (219). As previously discussed, the intersex hero of the Bildungsroman often faces invisibility within the cultural grid, but in *Annabel* it is also reinforced within the family setting. It is, however, important to underline that the oppositional nature of the relationship between Wayne and Treadway transforms eventually into a mentoring father-son relationship that becomes a prominent element of the novel.

After feeling betrayed by his family Wayne moves to St. John's where he gradually emancipates and explores his intersex identity firstly by deciding to stop the medication. Wayne's effort to come to terms with his corporeality takes place in the inhospitable space of St. John's. Whilst it is a space of carefree youth for Jacinta, for Wayne St John's becomes a space of reiteration of his gender ambiguity and a memory of sexual trauma. Jost defines Bildung as "the process by which a human being becomes a replica of his mentor and is identified with him as the exemplary model" (135) adding to the importance of the mentor as a catalyst in the protagonist's character formation. During Wayne's adolescence and his days living with his parents, it seems impossible that *Annabel* could actualize Jost's type of Bildung and that Wayne and Treadway would ever draw nearer. However, after Wayne's sexual attack by Derek Warford in Battery, the reader witnesses Treadways' reconsideration regarding his inability to cope with his intersex child: "Though Treadway had never called Wayne anything but his son, he knew and had always known that within his son lay hidden a

daughter. He had seen this daughter in the past day here in St. John's. He had seen Annabel in Wayne's face" (440). Following the realization that within his son lay a daughter, Treadway approaches Wayne's true identity based on his son's individual experience and gradually begins to look for possibilities that would enable his son's life unrestricted by social norms (Amato 224). Through Treadway's shift of position, the mentor figure takes on a more subversive meaning, for rather than simply reflecting the protagonist on the mentor persona, it serves as a reconnection between father and son. Above all "[c]oming of age is . . . a drama of coming to terms with the father, and with all the social and cultural governance for which he stands" (Millard 22). The challenging relationship with the father and the catalytic role he plays in the hero's formation is further stressed by Millard: "Coming of age is thus a drama of coming to terms with the father, and with all the social and cultural governance for which he stands" (15). Such an approach allows the reading of the father-intersex child and mentor-protagonist relationship as a means to resolve the dramatic tension between heterosexual normativity and intersex intelligibility. With his financial support that helps Wayne go to university, Treadway encourages Wayne's Bildungsprocess that is not indoctrinated into hegemonic discourses. Thus, Wayne is able to imagine an authentic self, informed by his gendered identity, that is reminiscent of Treadway's connection with nature: "He knew on the train that in his thinking he was not so different from his father. His father would, this coming winter, walk his trapline towards unnamed places, and Wayne would finally be on his way to a landscape that was for him as magnetic and as big as Labrador" (457).

Yet, the external force that molds the individual in question and helps regain his sense of individual agency is informed by another mentor figure in *Annabel.* The mentor has also been described as "an exemplary figure" who shows the young hero the way to acquire the "necessary cultural codes that define the social space to be inhabited" (Aviles 142). Jacobs

also points out to the decisive role of the mentor in the Bildungsroman, who guarantees the success of the process of Bildung in a teleological manner: "Um die teleologische Orientierung der Entwicklung … deutlich zu machen, bedarf es … der Einführung von Erzieherfiguren, die das Ziel des Bildungsprozesses programmatisch formulieren, vorleben und behutsam durchzusetzen versuchen"[26] (272). It is also worth mentioning that the mentor role is evident in the traditional female Bildungsroman but, here, the role is assumed by a male figure who most commonly becomes later the heroine's husband. During her process of growth, the heroine adheres to her guardian's lessons and her self-development passes through several stages of maturation such as marriage, awakening of the senses and awareness of her sexuality.

In *Annabel*, it is Thomasina who resumes the role of the facilitator. She embodies "that guiding hand that demonstrates the method of integration back into the realm of normal youth, which in turn signifies the easy flow toward adulthood" (Acland 121). Thomasina's free spirit makes the plea to autonomy and free will every Bildungsroman exemplifies. Thomasina's concept of identity formation and development is critical to Wayne's understanding of his intersex condition as "[t]o Thomasina people were rivers, always ready to move from one state of being into another. It was not fair, she felt, to treat people as if they were finished beings. Everyone was always becoming and unbecoming" (41). The fact that Thomasina embraces the fluidity during the identity construction process serves to strengthen the teleological structure of the genre as "her aim is to empower the infant and make it remember, even if unconsciously, its duality" (Urbaniak-Rybicka 88). Right after she learns about Wayne's condition, she tells Jacinta that love, and understanding is everything a baby needs no matter how it is born: "That baby is all right the way it is. There's enough room in

[26] In order to highlight the teleological process of the education, the introduction of a mentor, who programmatically shapes, sets an example and cautiously tries to secure the goal of the process of Bildung, is required. (Translation E.K.).

this world" (26). The ideological and cultural clash between the novel's two most influential characters, regarding Wayne's self-cultivation, symbolizes two opposing forces that affect his Bildung: "Thomasina shows the defying force against the masculinity which Treadway tries to exert into his son's life" (Kit and Yahya 39). These oppositional forces can also be read as indicative of Wayne's hybridity and in-betweenness that emphasize his struggle towards a unified self.

Winter's novel shows that the process of Wayne's Bildung is a gradual one and is encapsulated in numerous moments of awakening. First, he learns about his condition when Thomasina takes him to hospital as his belly is filled with menstrual blood. The way Dr. Lioukras, his specialist, looks at his intersex body is connected to the shift in the medical gaze: "When Dr. Lioukras looked at Wayne's breasts, he saw beauty equal to that which he would have seen in the body of any youth, male or female. It was as if he saw apricots growing on their own tree, right where they belonged" (212). Until that moment when doctors or his parents looked at Wayne's body, they either turned their look away or were amazed by its ambiguity which escalated the obscurity around him: "[Treadway] had not been able to stop looking at his son's body and seeing things he did not want to admit . . . [H]e had seen that his son had breast buds, small and tender through his undershirt, and it had shocked him" (160). Not being overlooked or looked at with amazement or disgust is the first step of Wayne's reorientation as Dr. Lioukras observes Wayne as a site of definition within the framework of body essentialism about gendered identities. The doctor's different approach to Wayne's body opens the possibility of revisualizing the medical gaze that until then was represented by a heteronormative authority.

The openendness of the story does not only become a part of the developmental process of the hero, but it helps to reverse the solid gender norms that are very commonly depicted throughout the narrative. To this end, Thomasina's words to Wayne exemplify very vividly

what identity formation looks like not only for intersex people but for everyone: “Everyone is a snake shedding its skin […] We are different people all through our lives. You even more so”. The representation of difference for the various identity categories is portrayed as a process of constant change, never attainable and always dynamic. As a result, what the novel accomplishes in the end is to present a possibility for Wayne to embrace his intersex condition and stop living in the shadow. There is a certain degree of hope for the future described in the end of the narrative; a hope that there is space for alternative representations of bodies that transgress the limits of heteronormative culture.

5 LIANNE SIMON'S CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE HERMAPHRODITE

> Why should God have spared me? I'd grown up in a church that thought it had all its doctrine right. My faith was in Christ, but my life didn't provide much evidence of it. I couldn't even work out in my mind which sex God wanted me to be.
>
> −Lianne Simon, *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite*

Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite serves as another compelling example representative of the intersex Bildungsroman. Published in 2012, it is a Coming-of-Age novel written by Lianne Simon who herself identifies as intersex and has struggled with DSD. This is the only novel in my project whose author is intersex. The choice of the word 'hermaphrodite' in the title is quite uncommon considering the nomenclature history presented in previous chapters and the author's personal experience. However, it is suggested that the choice of word is justifiable on the grounds of the historical setting of the narrative.

Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite is a first-person narration that follows the intersex protagonist Jameson_Jamie[27] from childhood to the early years of adulthood into a journey between male and female. Jameson, similar to the author of the novel, has mixed gonadal dysgenesis and his gonads were removed surgically at a young age. At present we see Jameson, who is a sixteen-year-old four-foot-eleven college student spending his first year away from home and resides at a male dorm in the seventies. His appearance is subtly depicted as thin and short and his facial characteristics hint to a sort of female appearance underscoring his ambiguity.

[27] In the beginning I mostly refer to the protagonist of the novel as 'Jameson'. After the revelation of his intersex identity by Sharon, I address him_her as Jameson_Jamie to mark the gender in-betweenness of him_herself. I consider this more meaningful and useful for my analysis as the "I" narrator frequently refers to his male and female side in the third person. The narrator also addresses to the elfin princess who Jamie regularly sees in the mirror and represents Jameson's younger self because he used to assume the identity of an elfin princess. It is hard to differentiate between the elfin princess and Jamie as a girl so I will refer to the protagonist as Jamie only when she assumes her female gender identity in interactions with other people.

He was born in Oswego, a small city in the state of New York in the nineteen sixties. He was raised according to strict Christian ethics and his parents, being familiar with his intersex condition, home-schooled him and allowed him to live as a girl, named Jamie, until the age of nine. In other words, he lived "a childhood protected from worldly experiences" (Rosowski 30), a main characteristic of the novel of awakening. After that, his parents forced him to be a boy and he created the identity of Jameson who only "existed as a thousand boys-don't and boys-do rules" (Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite 9).

Sharon, Jameson's friend, is a medical student and has just found out about Jameson's intersex condition at the hospital where he underwent an appendectomy. At the beginning of the novel Sharon reveals to Jameson the doctors' affirmation that he should have been raised female. This unforeseen revelation provokes an outburst of Jameson's childhood memories.

Throughout the narrative the themes of growing up are evident in several cases; education, love, religion, and familial bonds are some of the pains and pleasures that are evoked in the novel. Going through each of the abovementioned stages of Bildung marks a gain in knowledge and experience which are pivotal for the hero's self-growth. The use of the first-person narrative voice minimizes the distance between the author and the hero and serves as a unifying power that consolidates the hero's fragmented self. Although the proliferation of the narrative voices uttered through Jameson and Jamie, and also Jamie's younger alter ego the 'elfin princess', sometimes impede the narrative flow, I believe that the plurality of the intersex hero's voices serves as a major attribute to the deeper understanding of the hero's feelings and torn identities. Also, the first-person narration contributes to the spherical recount of the story where the hero's inner thoughts and fears are bluntly exposed and are emblematic of narrative authenticity. Besides, the first-person narration might result from the fact that the author, too, identifies as a person with DSD, and some of the events of Jameson's life correspond to her personal experiences, too.

5.1 INTERSEX AND RELIGION

The structure of the text, especially in the beginning, is peculiar and complex as the narrative is conducted from the point of view of Jameson addressing to an image of his female childhood self that he observes in the mirror. His female childhood name was Jamie and often intertwines in the narrative framework. This threefold perspective accurately mirrors the controversial nature of the hero's identity and highlights the incompatibility of the coexistence of Jameson, Jamie, and the elfin princess in one coherent self. It hints towards an assumption which the reader already senses is true about the hero from the beginning; *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* is not a novel about the recognizability and the resignification of its hero as intersex, but a novel about an intersex individual who deeply wants to identify herself as female. Moreover, the stylistic strategy of the inner second voice is repeatedly used in the novel to express the thoughts of the elfin princess. It is a device used in most of the novels in my research, underlining the symbolism of a torn perception of the self. A striking example of the hero's frustration happens while Jameson stays at Sharon's place and starts cross-dressing: "The princess in the mirror scowled at me when I took off Jameson's pajama bottoms. She didn't like seeing what was down there because it proved she wasn't a girl like she thought. She only had a pretty face and small size. "'Don't be sad, princess,' I tried to reassure her" (18). At first sight, it might seem that the hero suffers from a multiple personality disorder, but as the narrative progresses, it becomes obvious that the elfin princess emerges only to facilitate a disconnection from reality. Jameson's sensed identity is suppressed within cultural and social discourses and only in an imaginary, parallel life can he be the real person he wants to be. Above all, the strong dominance of the voicefulness of the elfin princess becomes a symbolic manifestation of how breaking the silence about intersex and about growing up intersex reinforces "the symbolism of voice as a tool to become an intelligible subject" (Amato 234). Jameson_Jamie's paradoxical behavior

of easily switching from a ‘he’ to a ‘she’ throughout the narration is indicative of the loss of a coherent subjecthood and highlights his_her fractured self.

The strict religious education that prevailed at Jameson’s home had a strong influence on his formation as a young teenager. The existence of God is believed to provide an answer to his continuous prayers for an identity that will satisfy his parents: “I finished by asking God if he would make me a boy and, if not, then make it ok for me to be a girl” (28). The novel’s profound reiteration of Christian ethics is reminiscent of the theological formation of identity that has been, according to sixteen-century pietistic theologies, the fundamental concept of Bildung in the early forms of the Bildungsroman. The process of self-formation based on the prototype of God lies in the roots of Jameson’s ethics for a lifelong struggle for virtue. While he is grieving over Tyler’s death, the man Jamie fell in love with, and the impossibility of a shared life with him, his mother soothes him by revoking his duty to God as a good Christian: “He [God] didn't want you to marry that boy. He does want this experience to drive you closer to Him, to make you more like Christ. He has something else in mind for you. . . Even if it means growing up to be the man your earthly father expects” (109). The mother’s words imply that God’s will is comparable to his father’s will granting the latter godlike power. Yet, the hero’s relationship to God does not remain unaffected throughout the narrative. On the contrary, Jameson_Jamie’s coming of age and self-awareness derives also from the changes he experiences regarding his faith to God. Calling into question God’s authority is a pivotal element that allows the hero to move beyond the gender restrictions that are imposed on him_her by his_her parents and by religion and helps him_her believe that God’s love for him_her is the same regardless of his_her gender.

Although there is no exact reference to the denominational background of the family, one can infer from Jamie’s comments about the churches she has visited that the family belongs to the Protestant Church: “… I’d attended the Methodist church with Tyler and

Sharon, and the Presbyterian church with Kaylah" (97). Jamie's family is strictly religious and, as mentioned before, she struggles to live a life acknowledged by God. Within Conservative Protestant Christianism divine intervention in everyday life and in the formation of the self plays an improtant role as "higher levels of perceived divine control may correspond to the sense that events and outcomes are beyond one's own personal control" (Schieman, Pudrovska and Milkie 170) which is the case in most of Jamies' and her family's concerns. However, intersex within the Christian church has often been rendered unspeakable. Jamie's father arranged an appointment with pastor Nyquist to counsel her on matters of gender. During this meeting Jamie reaffirms her initial fear that this God does not accept the way she was born: "Was that what God thought of me? A homosexual and a transvestite? How was I supposed to be a boy with such a girl body?" (99). While "using a 'religious schema' to interpret an intersex event is one way to help an individual and/or their family come to terms with not only their intersex status, but face the uncertainty of gender identity" (Kerry 282), in the case of Jamie, pastor Nyquist is dismissive from the beginning and does not offer any viable solutions that would embrace her new identity. As intersex raises theological and ontological questions about the view of the formation of the self in the image of God, Jamie's body and self-perception invalidates this same view. This results in the clash between her selfhood and her religious beliefs and her disillusionment.

The exploration of religion as part of Jamie's personal develoment is present throughout the novel especially while she is trying to find a place in the world that would be accepted by God. Her answer to Tyler's question about whether her life glorifies God is evident of her conflicting feelings: "Jesus died on the cross for me. I try to obey him but knowing what's right isn't always easy" (31). The feeling of guilt and doubt and the low self-esteem climax in the novel while she is trying to find peace in her decisions and come to terms with what is expected of her by God. Her strict Christian upbringing has not helped

towards boosting her feeling of self-worth either. The irony in this case is that the 'givenness' of biology is praised as divinely ordained in Christianity and in this sense immutable (Cornwall). At church, she prays to God and at the same time reveals to the reader that she cedes control of her selfhood to God: "Lord, please help me be the person you want me to be" (74). In Christian Protestant thought, and especially in an environment where religion is overemphasized, as is the case in Jamie's family, waving the right of control over one's identity brings about feelings of loss of self-esteem and self-worth.

The conflict between the individual and the social context is so intense in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* that Jamie decides to find shelter in the desolate setting of St. Andrew's where she resumes her female identity and her only duty is to take care of little Rachel, a young orphan girl she will eventually adopt. The fact that Jamie's disillusionment gradually questions her religious beliefs strongly resembles the thematic framework of the traditional Bildungsroman where the hero's formation depends on the confrontation between what is believed to be unshakeable in life. Religion and belief in God had been an indispensable part of Jamie's childhood and living according to conservative Christian ethics was inculcated within her mindset from a very early age. Her intersex identity, however, challenged her morality and her hope to be a girl was regarded as an immoral conduct that dishonored the glory of God. Thus, the only way towards self-liberation was to create a distance between her existence and the existence of God. The process of identity development, prompted by the fact that she started college away from home, instigated a sequence of formative events that also unsettled her spirituality. Only after the critical period of her maturation and reconciliation with her intersex identity does Jamie find a way to reconnect with Christianity and reembark on a journey where her God understands her body as it is.

5.2 BELONGING THROUGH GROWTH, GROWTH THROUGH BELONGING

Similar to a female Bildungsroman, *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* is an intersex Bildungsroman that inherits some of the principles that shape the transition to self-development mentioned in the previous chapter. Jameson_Jamie's self-growth is not achieved in solitude but within a community that is supportive of his_her intersex identity and fosters his_her desires.

Apart from Sharon and Kaylah, who function as catalysts for Jameson_Jamie's self-awareness, there is another community comprised of other individuals with a certain amount of sexual ambiguity called 'the Sorority'. Before accepting Jamie in the group, she is asked to be interviewed by its members who will vote whether the criteria for the membership in the club are met. The interview is performed in a hot tub where all the members enter naked in order to expose their bodies to each other's gaze. The ritual is reminiscent of the Christian ritual of baptism, here one has to be immersed in water in order to be recognized as a member of the Church. In a sense, it seems that the process of visibility to and of each other is at the basis of this intersex Bildungsroman as it unsettles the historical past of the notion of monstrosity linked to intersex. I will return to the thematic of monstrosity in detail later in my review of Eugenides' *Middlesex*. Jamie confesses that "[i]t was great that I wasn't alone. The other ladies were friends. They weren't freaks; maybe I wasn't either" (146). Each of the members is exposed to one another because firstly, being able to see something renders it true, and secondly, because exposure signifies shared knowledge. The sense of belongingness to a larger community not only reflects the image of a strengthened personhood, but also displays the construction of an intersex identity perceived as 'normal'. Felski's approach to the notion of the female community in the female Bildungsroman can be useful in examining the function of the sorority in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* as "the model of the female community offers an alternative form of intimacy grounded in gender identification"

(132). Within the sorority the gendered identity is represented as a de-pathologized intersex identity that enables the hero to envision a possible future for an intersex self which will not imply freakiness. The presence of more than one intersex character implies that intersex is not a rarity as demonstrated in my theoretical analysis. At the same time, the intersex sorority represents the significance of social interaction in contrast to individuality and isolation that has not proved to be enough for the intersex hero. In the end, Jamie is depicted as an equal member of this specific community, a fact that minimizes frustration and alienation.

Along with the members of the intersex community, several female characters in the novel play a supporting role to Jameson_Jamie's intersex awareness. First, Sharon breaks the silence and reveals Jameson's intersex condition. Second, Kaylah has always accepted her cousin as the elfin princess she has been since childhood and represents the connection with the lost self. Next, Lisa befriends Jameson and introduces him to the Sorority that results in Jameson's consolidation with his intersex identity. And finally, Alicia, Jameson's sister, has been a vigorous advocate of Jamie all along, sharing a form of silent communication and alliance against their parents. The narrative effect is that the characters create a systemic matrix that verbalizes the protagonist's intersex identity and gradually facilitates the process of awakening. Jameson_Jamie's essential need to belong somewhere plays a significant role in the characterization of the novel as a Bildungsroman: "The Bildungsroman narrates the acculturation of a self – the integration of a particular 'I' into the general subjectivity of a community, and thus, finally, into the universal subjectivity of humanity" (Redfield 38). The female characters are neither mentors nor role models. They are merely the underlying agents of Jamie's self-realization and reaffirmation of her body and identity that is developed within the sense of a community as a whole.

Regarding family relationships, it is evident that the hero constantly struggles between his_her own hopes and desires and his_her family's expectations. Jameson's sense of a

coherent self is perplexed because of his parents' assumptions of his true identity. One of Buckley's essential requirements of the Bildungsroman is that the hero becomes fatherless either because of the actual death of the father, or in a metaphorical way because the hero grows away from his father's will (124). In the novel, Jameson's father is a stubborn and conservative man who cannot accept that his child was born with an intersex condition. He expects Jameson to become a real boy and when he realizes that Jameson has deviated from what he regards as boyish behavior, he not only punishes Jameson, but also creates the 'Things Boys Do' list reinforcing his social masculinization process. The enforcement of normative maleness is reminiscent of Wayne's masculinization process discussed in the previous chapter about Winter's novel *Annabel* where Treadway required from Wayne to complete gender-specific assignments in order to reinforce maleness. The strained relationship between Jameson and his father is perceived as a clash between Jameson's intersex identity and his 'normalization' procedure. Jameson realizes that checking off the boys' things in the list was in vain as "none of the items would be checked off by a boy. *So what was the point*?" (161). His father represents society's sex binarism where intersex is not an acceptable identity. Jameson's gender intelligibility cannot be realized in his father's eyes until he behaves as a real boy and by not doing so, he continues to be rejected by him: "My father had bled the little princess to death with his sad eyes" (169).

In another instance the father unexpectedly visits him at St. Andrew's and sees that Jameson has developed into Jamie. After Jamie's first shock and fear, her father convincingly persuades her to try to be a real boy because he strongly believes what the doctors had told him: "I spoke with another doctor last week. He said changing genders at your age is a bad idea. Too many issues. Should have raised you female from birth. Too late now. . . Perhaps, at nine, but not at seventeen" (99). His words certainly echo John Money's idea of the 'optimal gender assignment' based on the genitalia's appearance that would facilitate a steady

gender identity from an early age. When Jameson accepts his father's list and promises to go back to being a boy, he realizes that "[a] single word would suffice, but my heart couldn't find the courage to stand against my father" (103). However, Jameson shies away from the responsibility of maturity which would be expressed if he had defended his own truth. At that point Jameson is not mature enough to restrict his father's authoritarian imprint and his fear functions as a delaying step towards his dysfunctional coming of age: "Somewhere along the way I'd gotten lost in childhood, wandering the endless labyrinth of my imagination" (222). In retrospect, these words highlight another connection between the intersex and the female Bildungsroman where the heroine's sense of identity has to be regained from childhood. What is more, this delay is accentuated by the silencing effect of Jameson's intersex identity by his parents.

Although the father's reference to the doctor represents an attempt to renegotiate Jameson_Jamie's intersex identity, his doubts are shortly cast and he insists on rapid treatment. He wants Jameson to be 'fixed' as soon as possible because parental shame is constant: "What is ambiguous or unusual is made regular and therefore any potential problem associated with the condition or its surgical history is resolved and effectively eliminated, not requiring further discussion or disclosure" (Lev 33). A prompt treatment with testosterone hormones would, according to his father, put an end to Jameson's ambiguity, create a permanent identity, and, consequently, complete the physical transformation of his body into an adult male one. His father would close the subject matter and put it behind him as "the secrecy and stigma surrounding intersex perpetuates the perception of monstrosity, indicating to intersexed people that their 'defect' is so monstrous it should be erased" (Harper 2). Jameson is rendered powerless in front of his father's imperative; he is terrified in the face of his father's disappointment and finally yields under his intense pressure.

By contrast, Jameson_Jamie's relationship to his mother is equivocal because it is not always clear whether she accepts her child's intersex identity or whether she believes he_she would have a viable future. In her eyes, gender nonconformity has to be concealed but this does not take place at the cost of Jameson_Jamie's intelligibility. At the beginning of the narration Jameson's parents seem to have a shared belief about their child's obligation to be a boy. However, it becomes obvious that the mother allows her child to be a girl in the private realm of their house where she keeps away from the intrusive gaze of cultural normativity creating, thus, an imaginary space, a kind of chronotope, as mentioned previously, where Jamie's existence is permitted. Yet, there are several moments where Jameson feels that he has disappointed his mother by behaving as a girl and is expecting her to punish him. The mother, whose name is not revealed in the text, keeping in force an intentional narrative distance from the hero, is portrayed as a complex figure who seems to fight with her own feelings of self-doubt and guilt. Interestingly, when Jameson articulates his final desire to be a girl, his mother immediately reinforces all the socially conforming rules of girl's clothes and behavior and finds no difficulty in treating Jamie as her other daughter Alicia. After that, a mother-daughter bonding experience begins, and the lost time of adolescence is being revoked. Her ability to oscillate with ease between having a boy and a girl signifies her openness to accept her child's intersex identity and thus her preparedness for that development. It is almost at the end of the novel that we learn that the parents had considered changing Jameson's birth certificate and raising him as a girl. In an effort to explain why she hadn't allowed Jameson to be a girl after the age of nine she justifies her decision trying to provide closure and reconciliation in their relation:

> Home schooling was illegal back then. When we were charged with truancy violations, we asked Dr. Parker to help us change your birth certificate . . . But he wouldn't unless you had surgery. We didn't want to send you to public school as a

> boy, so we found a district near Springfield that would let us home school under close supervision. Meanwhile, we kept searching for a doctor who would help us change your legal status to female . . . By the time I found Dr. Cameron, your act had convinced your father you were happy as a boy. (180)

Her claim that Jameson's pretense as a boy had only convinced his father is, I argue, not coincidental. It suggests that the mother had always known that Jameson's sense of self was female, but she was willing to keep it a secret reclaiming the silencing effect common to the family that surrounds an intersex individual. Nonetheless, by being able to be a girl around her mother and by being treated as a sister by Alicia, Jamie stresses the importance of acceptance and inclusivity as a theme for her intersex intelligibility. The supportive mother-daughter relationship provides safety for Jamie and is proof that the hero's quest for identity does not have to signify his_her alienation from the mother.

To elaborate, the parents' detachment from their child has a tremendous effect on Jameson's personality as he has a constant feeling of failing them: "His eyes - those deep wells of disappointment - locked on the elfin princess and sucked the life out of her" (11). The parents' disillusionment in their child is expressed through actions and language. This follows the typical Bildungsroman taxonomy where the strained relationship between the hero and their parents is a common prerequisite for the hero's development. Consequently, the hero is often passively embracing authoritative perspectives about his_her life as he_she tries to "balance between inner aspirations and social demands" (Golban 18). Therefore, an important aspect of Jamie's quest is her liberation from her parents' rules that inhibit her self-growth. What is frequently mentioned as a typical characteristic of the Bildungsroman, is evident in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* since only when Jamie accepts the fact that she is a heterosexual female-identifying intersex is she able to confront her parents. The discovery of Jamie's sexuality, which in her parents' eyes is regarded as homosexual, can be

seen as an epiphany that brings the protagonist a little bit closer to adulthood. Indeed, the continuity of a solid selfhood had been interrupted when she was nine and it is its reclaim that is necessary to complete his quest. The sense of continuity of the self was broken and Jamie was stripped of her girliness marking the disintegration of the elfin princess from her identity.

In sync with the Bildungsroman tradition Jamie's developmental phase can only take place away from home. The motif of journey and motion as a key driving force of transition, as mentioned in the previous chapter, initiates the formation of the protagonist since only away from home can she explore the magnitude of her intersex identity. Her home symbolizes a return to rules and a return to gender binary behavior; one can either be a boy or a girl and all the blurry lines in between have to be eliminated. The geographical distance that is created between home and college signifies a metaphorical distance between heteronormative behavior and intersex. Crossing spatial boundaries is of significance for Jameson because it enables him to experience the part of himself that has been under pressure for many years. At the same time, the journey from home to college is not the only journey portrayed in the novel. Jameson's journey from home to St. Andrew's, where he is allowed to be a girl staying at the Gillespies during summer, turns into a journey of self-discovery revealing to him his desire for motherhood. It is again away from home that another aspect of his realization is empowered and later in the novel he returns to St. Andrew's in order to keep away from gender issues. After living with the pastor's family for three months and having confessed to him his intersex identity, Jamie realizes that he "hadn't struggled with gender issues for three months. The Gillespies accepted me as – well – me" (198). Thus, the hero's journeys can be examined as a series of healing journeys leading to a mature closure of the quest for an intelligible identity.

Trauma is a repeatable element in the intersex Bildungsroman but compared to the other novels, in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* trauma is presented only in the

form of psychological suffering and not of corporeal abuse by others. There are many occasions where the character experiences bodily symptoms of anxiety and depression but there is no evidence of physical abuse by another person. The narrative is peppered with various examples of how traumatic experiences can shutter ideas of positive body image and a sense of a coherent identity. An event that could have possibly led to a sexually traumatic experience takes place during Jameson's second year at campus when he has returned to classes as Jamie. During a break Jamie offers to help with a guy's term paper without knowing anything about him. Surprisingly, Sean drives by and alerts Jamie to the stranger's intentions without, however, clearly articulating the possibility of a sexual assault. What the reader only knows about the stranger are implications of his dark intentions with a choice of language that implies threat: "a guy with black-rimmed glasses", "he leered at me", and "The guy I was following grabbed my hand" (149).

Moreover, Jameson_Jamie's continuous gender transitioning puts him_her in a state of profound anxiety reinforcing the traumatic relation to her sense of self. Growing up marks the creation of distance from the self, family, and friends. In an effort to manifest his_her rebellious youth and to deal with his_her frustration, Jamie drives carelessly on the highway while he_she is drowning in suicidal thoughts: "Out on the road, at high speed, a bit of gravel could end it all. Wouldn't that be nice? They'd cry about losing their son in a motorcycle wreck, all right, but Dad would consider it a boy way to die" (166). Both instances inform the interpretation of the novel through the lens of a typical intersex autobiographical narrative and thus sexual assault and suicidal thoughts unfold into a narrative that depicts the psychological trauma of the hero of the intersex Bildungsroman.

Meanwhile, Jameson's experiences with the medical community and his first year at college seem to have an even more traumatic effect on him providing apposite context for the intersex reading of the text. The medicalization of the intersex body and the medical

protocols of the time are represented by the three doctors that appear in the narrative who function as agents of Jameson's gender identification. The protagonist experiences the visits to the doctors traumatically and feels despair at the thought of a next possible treatment so the experiences with the medical realm symbolize medicalization as a defining feature of the intersex identity: "Nothing good comes from going to a doctor" (49). Furthermore, the symptoms Jameson experiences at the beginning of the narration when he and Sharon talk about his intersex condition prove that he is presumably suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by the medical interventions and forced medical treatments he had in his childhood:

> Images from my childhood tumbled across my vision, like leaves on a windy fall day. My hands clenched on the wooden edge of the kitchen table as my world spun. I lay on cold steel, crying and alone. Doctors surrounded me, talking to each other. One poked my belly. Another examined me between my legs . . . I took several deep breaths, trying to slow my racing heart. My body trembled on the examining table. *Why isn't Mom stopping them?* (21)

In addition, the connotation of Jameson's traumatic experience on the medical examination bed where he lay with his parents' consent becomes obvious. Even after almost ten years it is extremely difficult for him to come to terms with the fact that his parents have been the primary agents of his challenged sexed embodiment and gender identity and still continue to be since they only approve of him as a boy. The child within him revolts against his parents' collaboration with the medical authorities creating an alienation from them. This seems necessary for his self-growth and echoes a rite of passage typical of the Bildungsroman hero.

These vivid examples of psychological and physical violence explicitly show that the hegemonic culture of the medical authorities and of cisgender[28] people foster judgments over the intersex body rendering it pathological and aberrant. What is more, Jameson_Jamie's was even harassed by Professor Pennington at college: "Professor Pennington liked to hand out embarrassing assignments. The previous year she'd made me give a speech explaining why being a girl was better" (147). The intersex individual's low self-esteem is only reinforced as his_her subjecthood is threatened by groups of cultural hegemony that withhold his_her self-sufficiency.

While the stage of education, necessary for the traditional literary framework of the Bildungsroman, is touched upon in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* as a background setting, there is no substantial insight in how, or whether at all, formal education has transformed the protagonist of the novel. Whilst in the beginning of the novel Jameson seems goal-oriented and announces that he not only wants to finish college, but also pursue a PhD, the transformation into Jamie has a subsequent effect on her aspirations. However, it instantly becomes clear that the dream of a PhD and maybe even college, to begin with, has been inscribed in her subconscious by her father: "I have a doctorate to finish before I can even think about gender issues . . . My father was always limited because he didn't have a degree. He wanted his sons to graduate from college. My brother died in Vietnam. I'm all that's left" (40). But in the end, Jamie decides to leave school, take care of Rachel, and reconnect with God. Unlike the other novels, where taking part in the educational system reflects a stage towards the protagonists' formation as adult individuals, in this novel the protagonist perceives institutional education and finishing college as an obstacle hindering the pursuit of her own path towards spirituality and the desire for motherhood. A meaningful

[28] Cisgenders are people who live comfortably with the gender they were designated at birth. A heterosexual cisgender woman is the one who was born in a female body and is attracted to men and a heterosexual cisgender man is the one who was born in a male body and is attracted to women.

life for Jamie is signified with the disconnection from meeting the social expectations imposed on Jameson because she has probably associated education with her oppressed past as a boy.

And although the traditional Bildungsroman often ends with the return of the hero back home symbolizing the distance the hero has covered to become who he/she is and brokering a reconciliation among the characters, here the return is subverted. To specify, the function of the return demonstrates mainly a reverse return not to the actual home but to the family. Indeed, in the last scene Jamie's parents actually move to St. Andrew's to be closer to Jamie, where she has created her own family, accepting the fact that their child is a girl and marking their self-reflecting moment in the novel that for the first time is indicative of a functional parent-daughter relationship. Despite their shift, Jamie's emancipation is achieved irrespectively of her parents' approval as in the end of the novel she appears to be self-conscious of her female identity supported by Sean's love. Agency, a central element for the hero's Bildung, is revealed towards the end of the narration as Jamie is comfortable in her own body and appears mature enough to start on a journey away from home. All the aforementioned thematic and stylistic features are regarded as milestones of Jameson_Jamie's maturation. In this sense, in the end, the hero's process of being and becoming is believed to be successful as the self is socially functional and the desire for self-realization is fulfilled.

In fairness, however, the narrative closure is successful only by the reiteration of hegemonic representations while the social need for one sex and one gender is extensively proclaimed. From a critical point of view, it is worth mentioning that nowhere in the novel is an intersex identity recognized as sufficient per se. On the contrary, there is a constant reminder of an either/or gender intelligibility and a repetition of gender performance that reverberates the dominant discourse of heteronormativity. The narrator seems to imply that in order for Jameson to gain intelligibility he has to become either a heterosexual girl or a

heterosexual boy. For the protagonist, the ending that sets closure to the hero's transformative journey consists of motherhood and a heterosexual marriage that restores happiness as the highest value of the classical Bildungsroman (Moretti 557). Hence, there is another way in which the dialectical tension between heteronormative and intersex discourse is demonstrated in that sex binarism is reaffirmed by Jameson's choice to live as a female. Matos has addressed this issue by claiming that "when an intersexual individual chooses to live as a particular sex, it can be said that they are buying into the normative regulation of binaristic sexuality" (Towards Livable Mode of Existence: Judith Butler's (Undoing Gender) 31). Notions of the constructive element of gender norms constantly permeate the novel resulting in the simultaneous reaffirmation of the performativity of genders and discard of the discourse of essentialism that is fundamental for the intersex. This subversive function of the novel might affect intersex intelligibility as it denies the very essence of an intersex identity and promotes an either/or rationale.

The biological role of reproduction is one that cannot be assumed by an intersex. However, the social role of parenthood and motherhood is understood as an element of femininity in the social order and if taken over, carries along further connotations. It might be because of this that Jamie wants to adopt Rachel so desperately. Even towards the end of the narrative Jamie acknowledges her own insufficiency as a woman and wife: "A wife was supposed to be all sorts of wonderful things that I wasn't" (222). In order to reaffirm her femaleness and renounce her own male self, Jamie takes the responsibility of a child and becomes, thus, part of the symbolic order of patriarchy that is expressed through her subordination to patriarchy. "My desire to be accepted as a girl paled in comparison to the hunger that drove me to be a mother" (189). Jamie's desire for motherhood relates to Firestone's conceptions of how biological essentialism affects all gender roles. According to her radically feminist ideas "[t]he heart of women's oppression is her childbearing and child-

rearing roles" (12). Additionally, Rich considers motherhood as a political institution "by which women have traditionally been controlled" (11). Nonetheless, Jamie evokes exactly that: she strives for this role in order to claim her female gender. Whilst motherhood is considered to set an obstacle to personal growth in the traditional novel of awakening, Jamie considers it to be a chance for self-realization and the momentum of her personal growth: "God's given me five months of relative bliss caring for Rachael instead of worrying about my gender" (203). The time they share together gives Jamie an opportunity to embrace another perspective towards life, where she is allowed to a space of normality. The Christian element that permeates the novel, is also evident in the ending of the narrative. Motherhood is a space where Jamie's female identity is reinforced and is seen as a passage towards femaleness. After being allowed to care for Rachel, her sense of self as a mother and provider for the girl has been entirely impacted by her role.

Ultimately, the connection between *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* and the conceptual framework of intersex subjectivity is based on two axes. One is Christianity and the effect of religion on the protagonist's identity construction. The other is the endless quest for the loved one, a point analyzed in the theoretical part of my thesis through Plato's search for the missing part of one's identity in order to become whole. As far as Christianity is concerned, Jamie's father insistence on confessing and on keeping close ties with the Church is in line with Foucault's analysis of Christianity's involvement with control and confession as a means to control human sexuality. As discussed in previous chapters, the act of confession symbolized a metaphorical repression and control over the uncontrolled human nature. Jamie's father is shown to use the same way to control and manage her 'unacceptable' longing to become a girl. As Jamie's character collides with the overarching cultural and political norms of heteronormativity, it is religion that may light the path for the return to the roots, in her father's eyes. Nevertheless, Jamie eschews this pathological, at times, vision of

Christianity and finds inner peace with her God in the end. On the other hand, the core idea of the never-ending quest of the hero for the loved one is exemplified in Jamie's longing for a, what seems normal for society, relationship with Sean. The narrative does not consume itself with normative or non-normative depictions of love, as would be the case in the traditional Bildungsroman. Here, the impossible relationship is rendered possible, highlighting, thus, the protagonist's acceptance or not of her changing identity at different times. Although the quest for the other is described as a repetitive and futile process in the context of the prototype Bildungsroman, here, the novel proves that the emerging intersex individual is capable of reaching happiness in the end.

6 ABIGAIL TARTTELIN'S *GOLDEN BOY*

> 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 realize that I am whole, whatever that means and does not mean.
>
> - Abigail Tarttelin, *Golden Boy*

Golden Boy by Abigail Tarttelin is a 2013 Bildungsroman which depicts the life of sixteen-year-old Max Walker as he comes to terms with his intersexual identity. At birth he was diagnosed with true hermaphroditism having a 46, XX/ 46, XY karyotype. This means that he had ambiguous external genitalia and internal ovotestes. He did not undergo a genital reassignment surgery during childhood due to his parents' unwillingness to put him through continuous corrective surgeries and due to the fact that he clearly identified as a boy from a very young age. The approach of the novel to the upbringing of an intersex child differs from all the other novels that I analyze where the intersex condition was known from birth. In *Golden Boy* the parents don't seem to agree with the medical authority because they are informed of the trauma that medical interventions can probably have on the individual as he/she grows up. As a result, Max leads a very successful and seemingly happy life as one of the most popular boys of his school, until his childhood friend, Hunter, rapes him and leaves him pregnant. That is the turning point that initiates a number of climaxing episodes which urge him to make decisions about his life and unveil the secrets of his body.

Tarttelin's narrative approach resembles the one found in the next Bildungsroman of my study, Brugman's *Alex as Well*, where different narrative voices are heard. The multiple-person narrative perspective is identified in each chapter where the title of the chapter indicates the person narrating the events. The technique of multiple points of view in the Bildungsroman is not very common and it raises an obstacle to the narrator's reliability,

however, seen from an intersex perspective, it helps the reader receive an overview of the events of the story from different angles. The narrators in *Golden Boy* include all the members of his family, a close friend, and a doctor; Karen, the mother, Steve, the father, Daniel, the young brother, Sylvie, Max's soon-to-become girlfriend, and Archie, Max's doctor.

The novel starts with a chapter that is actually the school essay Max's young brother, Daniel, writes about his brother at school. He describes the main characteristics of him and why he admires him so much. Daniel makes one final comment about what he would like to become when he is older, which is a robotic engineer. He chooses this job because he wants to "add robotic extensions to normal human beings, so they can be whatever they want to be" (5). The remarks on the perfect body and the perfect human being that the young boy would like to create highlight the big contrast between cultural heteronormativity and Max's identity. Daniel's suggestion to 'work on' Max and "make him really big and muscly and give him a really deep voice" (5) explores the implications of how a typical male teenager should look like compared to how Max's intersex body is transforming. Daniel's imaginary future echoes Germon's assumption that "[th]e intersexed are rendered pathological because they defy monosexual categories at a somatic level" (8). Max rejects his suggestion and firmly declares that "he wanted to be who he was and see how that played out" (5). Normality is being put under question along with the who and what constitutes a 'normal' body. Is it normal in the sense of appearance, of performance or of similarity to the pre-existing male and female body? Accepting different looking bodies and reforming the cultural frameworks of human intelligibility is an issue to be dealt with.

Max's mother, Karen, is also heard in this coming of age story. She is an ambitious barrister for the court and tries hard to balance work and motherhood. She mentions that she feels in a way guilty for Max's intersex condition but there are no further details in the

narrative to support it. Karen gives the impression of being in denial of Max's intersex identity and she considers the word "intersex" a "horrible" (101) word when she discusses about Max with her husband, Steve. She even describes Max's intersexuality as an "illness" (101) which signifies a pathologizing culture that, nevertheless, isn't in tune with the Walkers' upbringing. Steve accuses her of avoiding dealing with reality: "You can't control everything! He's always going to be intersex and have to deal with those issues. Just because some knife-happy surgeons get their hands on his genitals, doesn't mean everything goes away" (249). Her denial, however, is a sign of her desire for things to remain unchanged. She likes that Max is a very easy-going teenager and is afraid when the situation starts to change after Max's rape. When Max becomes moody and his whole behavior changes, she confesses that she doesn't like this twist of events: "I like that he's not like other teenagers" and "[h]e's just my perfect, smiling, uncomplaining, clever, sweet, reliable Maxy" (157). Further in the narrative it is revealed that when Max was born, Karen, notwithstanding his intersex identity, left the house a couple of times. This not only had a traumatic effect on Max's personality, but it shows that she is a person who likes to be in control.

Karen's controlling nature is made even more explicit when she makes the decision for Max to have the abortion. She assumes the role of the decision maker because she believes that this is the best option for Max's future. If she were the only one to choose what was best for him when he was born, she would apparently go along with the doctors and have Max undergo corrective surgery that would turn him into a girl. Now that Max is sixteen, the only surgery he can have is a hysterectomy, but in the end, Max is not sure about it. Still, Karen is adamant about it: "We should have been more responsible. We should have made this decision a long time ago and not left it up to you to deal with. We thought we could leave it until you were eighteen, but we just made it your burden. I'm sorry. We'll do the operations and make you … a proper boy" (236). The mother-son relationship and its traumatizing

implications for both parties will be further analyzed in the next section about 'Trauma, Suffering and Disillusionment'.

6.1 TRAUMA, SUFFERING AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and cultural studies set forth the analysis of certain events and texts as traumatic during the ninety nineties. Trauma theory has become more and more present since then, exhibiting an indubitable connection between trauma and its linguistic depiction in literature. Many texts, apart from the ones about the Holocaust and 9/11, are addressed via trauma theory. Freud's psychoanalysis initiated a path towards self-understanding by bringing to the surface repressed memories and past traumas of the psyche. In Freud's early theory of trauma, it is perceived that trauma is caused by a primal scene which the person was unprepared to face at the time of its occurrence and keeps repressing the memory of it, until another occasion, sometimes a sensory one, triggers the traumatic scene and resurfaces it at present (Studies on Hysteria. 1895. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud). Radstone, on the other hand, comments on the later readings of Freud's primal scene theory and suggests that "[i]n alternative re-interpretations of Freud, it is the unconscious production of associations to a memory, rather than qualities intrinsic to certain events, that is understood to render a memory traumatic" (16) and that "a memory becomes traumatic when it becomes associated, later, with inadmissible meanings, wishes, fantasies, which might include an identification with the aggressor" (17). Likewise, Caruth, stresses the overwhelming effect of the escape of the traumatic experience from consciousness at the time of its occurrence, an effect that is vivified by the capacity of the traumatized to regularly relive the traumatic event in full detail (152-153). Although many events can be interpreted as traumatic in the traditional form of the Bildungsroman genre, the concept of trauma in literature has been quite recent. The use of

trauma theory for the interpretation of events serves different functions and takes on different expressions. The protagonist's coming of age of the intersex Bildungsroman is characterized by experiences that have traumatized the body leading to an identity formation that has to come to terms with or escape the memory of the trauma. That said, trauma plays a decisive role in the intersex Bildungsroman.

Yet, traumatic events are not only the ones that physically violate the body. Trauma is often the result of psychic distress too, however, because of its association with mental health, it remains obscure. Construing psychic trauma through a feminist scope, Brown clearly states that there has been an effort to normalize trauma and to take away its gendered particularities because "our images of trauma have been narrow and constructed within the experiences and realities of dominant groups in cultures" (102). In other words, traumatic experiences have continuously been analyzed through the male-dominant lens keeping other non-dominant groups like women, LGBTQ, and other cultural minority groups' traumas un- or misrepresented. In doing so, the ordeals of intersex people have been silenced throughout centuries rendering them into invisible beings whose severe mental and physical pain has not been examined: "[T]he systematic hushing up of the fact of intersex births and the use of violent techniques to normalize intersex bodies have caused profound emotional and physical harm to intersexuals and their families" (Chase 191). In addition, the silencing of medical practices performed on the intersex body has also been interpreted as an instigation of traumatic experiences and should be acknowledged as a trauma in itself.

Intersex people go through traumatizing experiences which are not only reduced to sex assignment surgeries that violate their bodies, but also reflect the oppression of living through the trauma of social isolation and not-belongingness within a bigender social order. Symptomatology of trauma can include "insomnia, isolation, depression, high anxiety, dissociation, suicidal ideation, flashbacks, sexual dysfunction, sexual numbing, substance

abuse, mood instability, self-mutilation, weight loss or gain, and work or school difficulties" (American Psychiatric Association 48). Trauma usually seeps through when the realization of intersex confinement sinks in. The invisibility of the intersex body is what causes traumatizing experiences for the individual because in a heteronormative world "making a body visible implies that it is being assigned a male *or* female gender in a univocal and definitive way" (Preciado 102). The perpetuation of the heteronormative imperative and bigenderism causes the intersex to feel the social seclusion as a collective traumatic experience which transcends the limits of individuality. Intersex identity intelligibility is culturally repressed by the heteronormative gender imperative and gender reassignment into male or female reinforces the traumatic experiences of the intersex infant. Forter contends that "the mechanism of oedipalization that produces relatively autonomous, functioning adults who identify as male or female . . . extend[s] rather than alleviate[s] the toxicity of traditional gender" (266-267) and as a result, the trauma of the ambiguous intersex identity is perpetuated: "[C]laims to an intersex identity are strongly tied to a history of medical trauma and social pressure to conform to a dichotomous understanding of sex and gender" (S. E. Preves 148). Consequently, trauma is closely related to the abuse of the intersex person and "[a]buse is conceived as both the manipulation of intersex bodies and gender identities and the displacement of intersex to the realm of nonexistence" (Amato 67). Trauma, thus, is closely related to the process of Bildung in the intersex Bildungsroman and as I will further show in my analysis of *Golden Boy*, it is the primary element from where the formative adventure of the intersex Bildungshero starts.

And although Moretti has claimed that trauma subverts the core of the Bildungsroman because traumatic events do not provide opportunities for growth but rather for regression (233), Bolaki is very clear when it comes to the link between trauma and the Bildungsroman and notes that Bildungsromane that include traumatic incidents "expand the genre's

topography by generating alternative stories of growing up" (35). Thus, they present a creative exploration of trauma itself. Growing up intersex hints to a different course of Bildung which is being processed through surviving traumatic experiences. Echoing this interpretation, Forter's observation becomes once again evident with regard to the formation of the intersex hero. The intersex hero's process of maturation will be successful within an environment that will "enable the metabolization of potentially traumatizing knowledge not in a way that secures adaptation to prevailing gender norms but in a way that makes alternatives to those norms both psychically possible and socially imaginable" (266-267). The reconciliation of the intersex with their traumatic experience may possibly lead to a liberation from the social constraints and the coming-of-age within the society again.

Another claim upon which my analysis of *Golden Boy* depends is that the reconfiguration of the protagonists' gendered identity is based on their creation of spaces where self-perception is delocalized. To make this possible, it is necessary to deploy Foucault's term of 'heterotopias' and show that Tarttelin's protagonist seems to exist in heterotopian spaces through the reliving of traumatic memories and through the element of the mirror. These heterotopias, I suggest, create spaces where the protagonist is enabled to develop his personal growth and gendered identities and reconsider his affiliations with the hegemonic culture. In other words and taking Bolaki's formulation of trauma as a point of departure, the intersex Bildungsroman deals with narrative spaces of identity formation where personal experiences converge as "trauma is confronted and loss is mobilized for productive ends" (35). This view presents the empowering aspect of trauma, which Max will employ in the end of the novel to come to terms with his new corporeality.

To deploy Freud's theory, trauma is present in a two-layered sequence throughout the novel connecting the primal traumatic scene with its posterior/belated after-effects. Firstly, it is Max's painful corporeal trauma of being a rape victim and secondly, it is the suffering

through the medical gaze of his early childhood when he was in and out of hospitals where doctors had to observe him. This repressed trauma comes to surface when he is taken to the same doctor by his mother, in order to have another consultation for a sex reassignment. It is at that moment that the traumatic experience comes into consciousness retroactively. This scene is mediated through Forter's explanation as to how the second event triggers the emergence of the first one:

> Something external happens to us, an event intrudes upon consciousness in an incipiently traumatic way, and yet this event remains unrecognized as such unknown and therefore unassimilated to our self-understanding. It then requires a second, retroactivating event to bring this knowledge into consciousness, where it is now experienced, for the first time, as the trauma that it was in the first place. (274)

Although Max's parents decided not to have him surgically reassigned, he still had to visit the doctor to have hormonal injections and to have follow-up consultations. These traumatic memories which Max suffered in his early childhood were not imprinted on his consciousness because nobody talked about them at home either. His parents silenced his condition advertently and hoped that the issue would never arise in the future. Max admits to Archie, the general practitioner working at the practice where Max goes after his rape, that his intersex condition had never been an issue at home: "Well, we never talk about it but... it's never been an issue. It's just a thing. I don't know. It's one of those things you just have to accept" (62). His intersexuality was repressed to such an extent that only after the shock of his rape and pregnancy did Max grasp the totality of his condition and wanted to learn more about it. Indeed, there is no end in Max's suffering and to use Caruth's words, "the trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of knowledge" (153). As a result, the images of his coming in and out of hospitals that return to his memory are traumatic experiences that are not repressed but were

not consciously recorded from the beginning: "[w]hat returns in the flashback is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness" (Caruth, Trauma: Explorations in Memory 152). For Max, it is the unspeakability of his intersex condition at home that eventually crushes his self-composure and unsettles his ability to approach reality.

The very early appearance of Max's rape in the novel symbolizes the dramatic effect of this ordeal in Max's coming into age process. The rape incident is often found in autobiographical intersex narratives and Tarttelin uses it as a narrative plot in *Golden Boy* to underline its reflection of real life. The vivid and unsettling description of the rape scene in *Golden Boy,* is the most powerful depiction of Max's trauma. In the narrative his sexual victimhood is a pebble which breaks the water's surface. Tarttelin presents Max as a person who is seemingly the perfect teenager, athlete, son, and student, but in reality, there is no place for him in a bigender world. Hunter, the rapist, is his childhood friend who knows from very early on about his best friend's intersex condition. During the rape, and after the first shock crushes in, Max tries to rationalize Hunter's actions by feeling guilty for having an intersex body: "I felt like it was his right . . . All the way through, I just felt like apologizing . . . For being disgusting, having messed-up junk" (43). The portrayal of this moment highlights the victimization of the protagonist which comes in contrast with the perfect picture of his life described in the beginning of the narrative. Thus, Max's objectification and victimization in the rape scene outlines his disempowered selfhood. Fittingly, the analogy drawn between the perpetrator, Hunter, and male domination allude to the patriarchal order of power Max is faced against: "I think about how it must feel to be a big, strong guy . . . with the ability to walk into any room and know you could overpower and take anyone you wanted. I wonder if I'd want that, given the choice" (21). What the author does here is to

invoke a popular stereotypical trope of male dominance and desire being imposed on a female, helpless body. The implication that this kind of sexual assault only happens to females accentuates Max's female nature while it also highlights the problematic notion of the motivation behind the sexual attack. Pratt's observations about the rape-trauma in the female novel of development can be read in fruitful ways in the narrative of Max's trauma. In Pratt's words, the rape-trauma archetype is commonly identified in female Bildungsromane where men "are pictured as agents of harsh disruption" (25) and cause the disorder of female authentic selfhood. Similarly, in *Golden Boy* the rape-trauma appears as a symbol of internalized gender norms where the intersex character is submissive to hegemonic power.

During the exact moment of violence against his body, Max, following a dissociative model of trauma, averts his eyes from Hunter and fixates his gaze at his room which is presented as the ultimate boy room. Silencing through the rape scene is Max's way to survive through the traumatic experience of bodily violation. On the walls he sees posters of England's national football team and of popular actresses, he looks at photographs of his team's victory in the Junior League, and there are DVDs, an LP player, and wires leading to the Xbox, and the Wii on the floor. Max's room, decorated like a typical teenage boy's room, reinforces the male identity. The stark contrast of this description while Hunter is raping him asserts the shadow of homosexuality that Hunter brings in the narrative and that permeates the history of intersexuality as shown earlier in my analysis. Hunter grunts and moans while he is pushing himself on Max and he is depicted as "an animal" and as "a predator" (16), who poses a threat to Max's vulnerable intersex body.

The text is haunted by notions of Hunter's homosexual desire commingled with shame and denial. Hunter admits that he has always been sexually attracted to Max but not because he is gay but because Max is a "freak", "a 'he-she" as he calls him: "'I'm not the freak,' he growls. 'There's nothing wrong with me. There's something wrong with you and

you're making me feel this way.'" (16). In an effort to deal with his deviant desire Hunter abases Max into nothingness: "You're not a guy. . . you're not anything" (19). The scene's symbolism is clear, and it illustrates Epstein's analysis of how intersex poses a threat to heteronormative hegemony: Sexual ambiguity threatens the possibility of gender contrariety as the basis for social order and thereby threatens the hegemony of heterosexuality (130). In *Golden Boy* Hunter symbolizes heterosexual hegemony that is threatened by Max's gender ambiguity. The ambiguity of his gender nonconforming body where both his male and female genitals are aggressively exposed is revealed and Max is demoted into nothingness. This nothingness or body vagueness resonates with the claim that, in history, the medicalization of the intersex body started as a form of prevention of queer desire. According to Butler the intersex body destabilizes cultural conventions and inhabits spaces of femaleness and maleness (Bodies That Matter: On the Dicursive Limits of "sex"). Thus, Hunter's pathological desire derives from a body that threatens sexual boundaries:

> The presuppositions that we make about sexed bodies, about them being one or the other, about the meanings that are said to inhere in them or to follow from being sexed in such a way are suddenly and significantly upset by those examples that fail to comply with the categories that naturalize and stabilize that field of bodies for us within the terms of cultural conventions. (Gender Trouble 110)

The author's intention to differentiate intersex from homosexuality is palpable from the very beginning of the novel. Tarttelin's ambition is to renounce any connotation of intersex with homosexuality firstly via Max's rape scene and secondly by reinforcing Max's maleness in the private space of his room where his rape takes place.

Although the novel depicts queer desire, this desire is at the same time diminished by the fact that Hunter expresses it through sexual violence. Actually, what the text does is erase

queer desire by any means. Perhaps this is an intentional attempt by the author because she wishes to show that the intersex body is not the cause of dark, homosexual lust. By wishing to see the intersex story through a different lens, Tarttelin shows that Max falls in love with Sylvie later in the novel.

Rape in the narrative takes on yet another meaning. Max is forcefully dragged into adulthood because the rape leaves him pregnant and at the same time his traumatic experience turns into a painful awareness of the workings of his body. His growth is frustrated as the rape brings him closer to the truth of his body and makes him realize how ignorant he had been about being intersex. This is the second time that pregnancy, as a narrative element, appears in the intersex Bildungsroman of this study. Although Max never questioned his male identity and has always felt attracted to girls, he comes to doubt the sociocultural structures of the world when he realizes that he has a unique chance to have his own child. He understands that there will never be another chance to be a biological father to a child because he identifies as heterosexual and has to confront his mother who wants him to undergo surgery in order to remove his gender ambiguity finally. Here, in contrast to *Annabel,* pregnancy is not unimaginable for Max. Max's pregnancy functions as a symbolic element in the construction of his intersex identity in *Golden Boy* as it exhibits an essentialist conceptualization of intersex authenticity.

Once again, drawing on the work of Caruth, who sees trauma as an experience that has not yet been made conscious, and suggests how traumatic experiences occupy a space that is inadmissible, this Chapter also examines the protagonists' experiences as an intersex child and as a victim of rape. It is the reiteration of the generic protocols of the Bildungsroman between childhood and adult versions of the same individual that are highlighted in *Golden* Boy. Max refuses to talk about his rape and even more to name the perpetrator not only because he feels guilty as shown before, but mainly because "[t]he act of

refusal, here, is not a denial of a knowledge of the past, but rather a way of gaining access to a knowledge that has not yet attained the form of 'narrative memory'" (Caruth 155). If anything is uttered in *Golden Boy*, it is the long-lasting effect of Max's rape in the management of his trauma seen through Forter's interpretation of the primary and secondary trauma as discussed earlier in this Chapter. As a result, the traditional Bildungsroman is remodeled to include modern concepts of juvenile development. Once again, the genre opens up a window onto the cultural shift that is the "simultaneous and mutually reinforcing transformation of the Bildungsroman in literary and scientific discourse" (Gillis 275). Through the incorporation of the traumatic events in the narrative and their connection to conscious and subconscious memory, Tarttelin succeeds in exemplifying that the intersex Bildungsroman is capable of accommodating a new model for intersex development from childhood to early adolescence.

Max has repressed his memories of having suffered by the medical gaze and by the violation to his body. He evidently suffers from PTSD after the rape and he experiences all the symptoms of the disorder formally described by the American Psychiatric Association: "nightmares, and flashbacks; avoidance symptoms, the marks of psychic numbing; and the symptoms of heightened physiological arousal: hypervigilance, disturbed sleep, a distracted mind. But first and foremost, *an event outside the range of human experience*" (126). On the threshold of emergence and identity, Max comes face to face with the consequences of his abuse. Although he mistrusts the medical authorities, the unwanted pregnancy brings him back to the clinic as there is no one else to turn to. As a result, the central event around which the novel turns is the discovery of the protagonist's intersex condition mediated by medical procedures that, as will be shown in the next part of my analysis, tend to promote the 'normalization' of the intersex body.

6.2 THE INTERSEX BODY AS A SITE OF MEDICAL INTERVENTION

Consistent with the history of the medicalization of the intersex body, as analyzed in Chapter Three, all the texts that I analyze contain instances of medical abuse and violation. These are specifically evidenced either as instances of experimentation, or voyeuristic documentation of the intersex body, or dehumanization of the intersex experience. Similarly, *Golden Boy* deals extensively with the medical management of the intersex body but at the same time, includes a non-hegemonic depiction of the medical authorities in the face of Sylvie, Max's doctor at the clinic. As the narratives are conducted from multi-layered narrative voices, we see how very often hegemonic heteronormative gender binarism is reproduced and articulated by medical authority. The structure of the intersex Bildungsroman captures the controversial nature of the intersex identity as opposing views - the one of the medical authorities and the other of the intersex individual - mirror the coexistence of opposite discourses that fight over control of the intersex body.

Biology and medical regulatory mechanisms are repeatedly challenged in the narrative of *Golden Boy*, thereby destabilizing the sex re/assignment of the intersex body. Body essentialism and postgenderism are the underlying principles that represent the coherent intersex subjecthood of the intersex Bildungsroman. In Tarttelin's work, gender and sex become in a sense a power relation whereby Carvalho notes that "[g]ender and sex are considered separately, and perceived as if they were different languages, different discourses, which overlap without rejecting each other, defined by both nature and nurture, by biology and behaviour" (2). The overlap of gender and sex is constant and whether bigenderism or postgenderism will preside in the end, remains in many novels of my analysis an open question for the reader. Nevertheless, considering the critical context between natural or cultural, leads to Morland's supposition that "the postsurgical body is neither successfully constructed by surgery into a clearly male or female form, nor is it still naturally intersex"

(301). The dramatic doctor-patient relationship is illustrated in the intersex Bildungsroman and oscillates between the rejection and the reaffirmation of medical authority through instances of regulatory medical power. The intersex hero is most frequently objectified in the eyes of the doctors as he/she represents a deviant gender identity that needs to be regulated.

The medicalization of the intersex person, which I examined in detail in Chapter Three, accentuates the hegemony of the medical power and resonates with Foucault's concept of the medical gaze analyzed in *The History of Sexuality*. Medical examinations, which here control sexuality, function as catalysts of power and pleasure: "The pleasure that comes from exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it" (45). In the past, the educational display of patients with intersex conditions was not a rare case and at the same time, mainly due to fear and ignorance, the intersex individual allowed him/herself to be objectified by science (The Birth of the Clinic 197). There are several examples of these educational interventions in the life of the intersex within the novels and all point to the fact that physicians act as agents of social control. This is mediated through the doctors who look "aghast, concerned, [and] serious" (157) when dealing with Max's intersex body. As a result, agency and resistance against medical authority is not articulated because of the fear of the unknown that is clearly narrated in the intersex Bildungsroman.

The hegemonic power of science is always passed on to the parents of the intersex child. Doctors prefer to have the parents on their side in order to implement the suggested medical treatment. Karen remembers the weight of the decision she and her husband had to carry when Max was born: "They [the doctors] said he would be mal adjusted, sexually confused, or suffer from gender dysphoria [if he didn't have the operation]. They said it was better to have the operations while he was young, that children were more resilient, that it

was better *we* confirm his gender as soon as possible" (185). The psychological effect the medical discourse has on parents is admittedly enormous. How can a parent make such a decision for their child? This question urges a discussion of the projection of normalization processes by the hegemonic medical discourse which, according to Foucault, can explain the repressive practices of medicine (The Birth of the Clinic). In this context, Horlacher comments on the subversive manifestation and the imperative of the medical establishment over the intersex body within the cultural context: "The former biologically 'natural' intersex body is, through a variety of medical procedures, denaturalized into a supposedly 'natural male/female' body" (153). Consequently, raising questions about the 'normal' and 'natural' body impact the parents' decision in a definitive way. As argued by Grabham, the medical emergency that is signaled by the birth of an intersex baby eradicates the autonomy and free will of the intersex adult: "From the time of birth, and the attendant 'medical emergency', the enormous amount of external medical and familial pressure and surveillance to which intersexual people are subjected indicates that their 'abnormal' corporeality renders them somehow more 'mappable' and, crucially, less autonomous than people who appear to be more clearly sexed" (43). In Max's case, however, Steve, his father, disagreed with the doctors and persuaded Karen to let Max's body grow in the way it was born. In contrast to most of the parents portrayed in the novels of this study, Steve valued Max's agency and autonomy the most: "If we don't listen to him, if we take away his right to his own choices, his own body, then he stops being an autonomous being and becomes a thing" (390). It is very uncommon, as shown in other autobiographical accounts of intersex individuals, that the parents remain resilient against medical power and their insistence on gender heteronormativity.

As reported in various autobiographical intersex narratives the effect of the medical gaze is possible to be tantamount to psychological stress and trauma for the intersex

individual connecting the intersex medical management with trauma theory. In her narration about her traumatic experience by the medical establishment Angela Moreno explains that "my doctors made a traumatizing hospitalization even more traumatizing by putting me on show for parades of earnest young residents with 'you're-a-freak-but-we're-compassionate' grins on their faces" (12). The medical gaze that is set in function results in the institutionalization of the intersex individual and his/her loss of control over their own existence. However, the fact that the intersex patient conforms to the doctors' orders is not demonstrative of his/her voluntary participation in the examination processes. Amato addresses the effect of institutional violence on the intersex mainly focusing on the "result of the internalization of the workings of the regulatory regime" and on the subversive power relations "inherent in the relationship between institution and individual" (174). Thus, the intersex individual develops an image of the self that is mostly dependent on its configuration by the medical system. The vacillation between a coherent intersex identity and the 'normalizing' medical reassignment procedure that is instructed by the medical regime always results in a violent backlash by the character in the intersex Bildungsroman. The outbursts that are triggered by the massive feelings of objection to and acceptance of the pathologization of the intersex corporeality appear as moments of epiphany for the intersex characters and structure a stage of maturity in their formation.

Max has always been compliant and has always tried to please his parents. Agency and autonomy of the intersex child or teenager are recurrent themes in the intersex Bildungsroman as will be shown in Chapter Seven. Max in *Golden Boy*, similar to Alex in *Alex as Well*, experiences a strong feeling of having been robbed of his right to make decisions for himself. The doctors used to treat Max like an object as he never gave his consent to how his body was being managed: "They [the doctors] always spoke over me, to Mum or Dad or to other doctors. They rarely asked me stuff, even when I could have just told

them the answer. . . I was an interesting case study for them, an experiment" (67). Further in the narrative, after Karen convinces Max to have a hysterectomy so that he can be a "proper" boy, Max feels determined: "It seemed that a lot of noise was silenced in my head, when she made the decision for me" (239). Once again, someone else decides for him and Karen becomes a symbolic figure of hegemonic culture as she sets the boundaries on Max's intersex identity. In a sense, she reproduces, as Horlacher writes in his *Transgender and Intersex: Theoretical, Practical and Artistic Perspectives*, the heteronormative medical discourse by promoting the correction of her son's body in order to uphold sex and gender complementarity.

As the twentieth century progressed, more and more corrective surgeries were performed on intersex patients while at the same time doctors strived to descry the elements of 'true sex'. Intersex discourse has to be read within the concept of medical understanding of sexual variation since the medical world has been claiming authority of the intersex body for more than one hundred years. In essence, "accepting genital ambiguity as a natural option would require that physicians also acknowledge that genital ambiguity is 'corrected' not because it is threatening to the infant's life but because it is threatening to the infant's culture" (Kessler 25). However, corrective surgeries on the intersex body are firmly rejected by critics of the medical procedures because corrections are performed to bring the body back to a 'normal' condition. The change of perspective is the first step to understanding how the intersex body works and how the intersex teenager can develop a sense of selfhood. In the end of the narrative, Max's formation turns full circle as he experiences a reconciliation with his intersex identity:

> It doesn't matter anymore if I'm either or both or neither. 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. (366)

Max's reflections resonate, I propose, with Cornwall's interpretation of the term 'healing': "Healing a particular body condition or state does not necessarily mean eradicating it. Healing can also mean changing a culture and reframing or resisting a particular narrative in order to claim a body-story as legitimate and good" (385). In the end, what all the novels in this study accurately show is that what is actually necessary for a truthful intersex representation and intersex intelligibility is a change of the ideological framework of the dominant culture.

7 ALYSSA BRUGMAN'S *ALEX AS WELL*

> It's me up there, dressed like a girl dressed like a boy.
>
> -Alyssa Brugman, *Alex as Well*

Alex as Well is a young adult novel written in 2013 by the Australian writer Alyssa Brugman. The distinct language and writing style used in young adult literature is clearly evident in this novel making it easy to exclude it from the Bildungsroman canon at first sight. However, I argue that the narrative fits my classification of an intersex Coming of Age story where the protagonist seeks a type of self-formation indicative of the Bildungsprocess that follows the Bildungsroman principle already discussed in my previous analysis. It departs from the traditional Bildungsroman tradition mainly because the time span of the narrative does not cover a big part of the hero's transition from adolescence into adulthood. However, the hero's relation to her sensed identity is successfully revealed and the process from innocence to knowledge and maturity is affirmed. Brugman displays the struggles of an intersex mind, and relates the growth of the individual as a constant cycle of successes and failures as illustrated in the typical Bildungsroman as well. Growing up means learning some ways of understanding and managing your inner thoughts and beliefs. As the genre encodes multiple ways of subject formation through concepts of identity and agency Alex's transition from innocence to knowledge is not accidental, marking the point of Seelinger Trites' identification of a Bildungsroman where "the hero self-consciously sets out on a quest to achieve independence" (11). The problematics of youth and socialization are manifested in this Bildungsroman through the concepts of agency and autonomy leading us to a novel subgenre, mainly that of the intersex Bildungsroman. The language and stylistic choices of the author might be a cue for simplicity but in the narrative, there is a clear emergence of an intersex individual and the formation of an autonomous self despite the norms of society. For

Alex, Bildung is realized through the process of recognizing the limits of her own personal development. It may seem that Alex's Bildung distances itself from the core element of Bildung in the traditional Bildungsroman. Nevertheless, in my analysis I will show that her Bildung enables the novel's hermeneutic dimension of the intersex subject formation.

Alex was born with an intersex condition but her parents, following the doctors' instructions, decided to raise her as a boy from a very early age. The decision to give their child the unisex name 'Alex' echoes the doctors' advice to use gender-neutral names for children with ambiguous genitals at birth. Now, at the age of fourteen, Alex stops taking the male hormones she has been taking all her life and identifies as a girl because she admits: "I've been a girl in my head since as long as I can remember" (Alex as Well 30). She has to face many obstacles raised especially by her parents who are not supportive of her decision to identify as female. Although her parents have not revealed to Alex her intersex condition and she cannot comprehend or justify with medical terms what is happening to her, she has a clear sense of her female selfhood. After a traumatic incident of bullying at her old school, where she used to attend as a boy, she decides to enroll herself in another school as a girl. The fact that she doesn't have the official paperwork to complete her enrollment at her new school will lead to the final revelation of her accurate birth certificate in the end. Until then, Alex starts living the life of a 'normal' girl that she has always been dreaming of and at her new school she makes new friendships, gets attention from boys, and is even asked to take part in a fashion show because of her unordinary looks.

Nevertheless, her female embodiment and behavior are unacceptable by her parents who are faced with a crisis. Their relationship with their child is problematic as they believe that she is just going through a phase and that she should soon go back to her male identity. Heather, Alex's mother, thinks that Alex's transitioning from male to female is a phase she will grow out of, which is very similar to how Jamie's mother reacted in *Confessions of a*

Teenage Hermaphrodite. Heather is facing great difficulty in accepting Alex's female identity and towards the end of the narrative she suffers from a mental breakdown and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Alex's father, David, also finds it hard to embrace his child's new identity but shows more empathy towards her choices. In the meantime, Alex discovers a series of reports from various nursery schools she had attended which show that Alex was a very challenging child from an early age. She used to cry excessively, she did not socialize with others, she behaved aggressively and did not enjoy the activities at school. Her socialization continues to be hard throughout her schoolyears since she has been a victim of school bullying.

Alex needs a birth certificate that confirms her female identity in order to be able to finalize her enrollment at her new school. When she seeks help from Mr. Crockett, a lawyer, to change her birth certificate, she finds out that she was born intersex and finally realizes the grounds of her torn identity. Upon learning the truth, Alex feels that she can never forgive her parents for keeping her true identity a secret from her and leaves home. Her part-time job as a model provides her with the financial independence to rent a flat and emancipate. Her journey towards self-formation and acceptance ends with her adjustment to her new life as an emancipated teenager. She lives on her own, she goes to school, and she can make enough money from the fashion industry to be financially independent. There is no reconciliation in the parent-child relationship, and it seems that Alex manages to grow stronger despite that. Alex enters adulthood prematurely, but she has developed resilience at a high level, which is characteristic of a conscious subjecthood that is achieved through determining her own gender identity.

It is a first-person linear story narrated from the point of view of Alex[29], a fourteen-year-old high school student who is transitioning from a life as a boy to a life as a girl. The story is mainly set at school representing primarily the omnipresence of social institutions in several Entwicklungsromane. As mentioned in previous chapters, Entwicklungsromane are novels that derive from the traditional Bildungsroman, but extend its thematic framework. *Alex as Well,* I contend, can be considered as a product of a blend of an Entwicklungsroman and a young adult story as in it "[t]he simple initiation process and soul-searching are replaced with more complex, psychological, alienation, social incompatibility, irresoluteness of the adolescent characters" (Bhujel 39). Additionally, school becomes a symbol of her transition as her change from an all-boys' school to a coeducational one is the first step she takes after coming to terms with her intersex identity. She often addresses the reader in an engaging way, giving him/her the opportunity to reflect on how Alex's sexed identity is negotiated in the narrative. The dialectic created between the narrator and the reader is common for young adult fiction as it employs the reader's interpretation and deconstructs the narrator's omniscience.

Adding to this, from the beginning of the narration, it becomes clear that there is a psychic split in the protagonist's mind who often has an inner battle with her male self, the 'other' Alex. The female Alex is the acting voice and agent of her subjecthood, and the male Alex appears as a voice in her head often to question and object to Alex's actions and feelings. The twofold voice of the narrator exemplifies the difficulties of constructing a coherent intersex identity pulling the individual back and forth between a male and a female subjectivity. The narrative authority is never completely assigned to the female Alex, as the other Alex continues to ghost her as a presence throughout the text. This narratological

[29] For the purposes of this analysis, I will refer to Alex as a girl because she identifies as female from the beginning of the novel.

method of switching from male to female and back to male signifies the elusiveness of the fragmented intersex development and integrity. At the same time the mosaic of voices that are playfully inserted in the narration manifests the invisibility of the intersex identity and the loss of autonomy. Alex's authentic self is lost among the plurality of internal voices, so the quest for an authentic self seems imperative for the journey towards Bildung.

7.1 AGENCY, EMANCIPATION AND THE AUTHENTIC SELF

Discourses about agency are vast, but it is beyond the scope of my reading of *Alex as Well* to delve into the plethora of the accounts for it. I look into agency in this novel as the motivational force that drives the protagonist to take control of her life and intervene as an active participant in the course of it. Agency becomes the driving force that, according to Lukács leads the Bildungshero to seek "fulfillment in action, in effective dealing with reality, and not merely in contemplation" (133). In her journey towards maturity, Alex, resembling the protagonist of the traditional Bildungsroman, is not a passive individual, but takes dynamic action which has a compelling impact on her destiny. Alex claims her autonomy by consciously making certain decisions that reinforce herself with the affirmation she has never received from her parents: "In modern psychology the notion of the self is closely tied in with consciousness, in the sense of being self-aware, possessing agency or conscious control, having self-knowledge, a self-concept and self-esteem, of being self-critical, of feeling self-important, and striving towards self-actualization" (LeDoux 296). I also connect the iterational dimension of agency with the predispositions and routines that Alex chooses to perform in order to reinforce her identity. For this, I embrace explications about agency asserted by Slaughter (2007), Cornwall (2013), Giddens (1984), and Emirbayer and Mische (1998).

When Cornwall discusses the erosion of agency of intersex people, she mainly addresses the erosion of their sexual identity and their ability to give and receive pleasure, because of the invasive surgeries performed on their bodies at a very young age. However, my understanding of the novel takes the concept of the erosion of agency a step further where the social surroundings of the intersex, in Alex's case her family, take away her right for self-determination. Alex's journey starts from a state of submissiveness to her parents' decisions to a state of assertiveness demanding her emancipation. Alex gains agency through her act of emancipation; an act that symbolizes the shift from lack of control over her life towards being able to make choices of her own. Her emancipation resembles the awakening moments that women experience in the female Bildungsroman reinforcing, thus, Alex with her female self. Until the moment she asks for help from her lawyer, her constant worry is that she feels that she is deprived of the freedom of choice and of the ability to determine her destiny: "I feel like I have no control over anything, you know?" (110). Especially the fact that Heather puts Alex's medication secretly in the food she prepares for her signifies the total erasure of Alex's subjecthood. Later, when Alex refuses to eat that food, not because she knows about its ingredients but because she had another fight with her mum, Heather finds another way to diminish her daughter's individuality by rubbing testosterone lotion on Alex's arms when she is asleep.

In hindsight, the secrecy in Heather's acts reveals a certain form of abuse from mother to daughter. This abuse can be read through Foucault's notion of the 'relationship of power' where power is not exercised directly upon the individual but rather on another action: "In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future" (The Subject and Power 789). Heather exercises her power over Alex's decision to enroll herself to

another school and to embrace her female self; acts that are interpreted as acts against Alex's agency which Heather is unwilling to embrace. Ultimately, the power relation between mother and daughter robs Alex's power and makes her more vulnerable.

Although Alex has decided to stop taking the male hormones, she is being exposed to male hormones in secrecy, mainly through pills that Heather inserts in her food and testosterone lotion she rubs on Alex's hands when she is asleep. At first glance, this intentional violation of a teenager's will does seem quite innocent as Heather convinces herself that Alex is going through an experimental phase. Nevertheless, Rodriguez further elaborates on this scene highlighting the connotation that acts in hiding reveal: "This violation of trust, this disruption in intimacy, beyond abuse, become acts of sexual violence as these products - both food and lotion – become that which is killing Alex to make room, once more, for the Other Alex" (41). Of course, Heather has a distorted view of her actions. She believes that since Alex had stopped taking her medication, she became unstable. She glosses over her act of secretly giving the meds to her daughter by convincing herself that this is a way to protect her: "Alex is of an age now where he should be able to make his own decision, but this is the thing- he needs to be a stable person first" (114). Nevertheless, Vic, a commentor who always appears on Heather's blog as the voice of reason, stresses that whatever Heather is doing is abusive: "[…] it's not up to Heather to decide Alex's identity. It's up to Alex, and right now Alex is not being allowed to make an informed decision about her own body and wellbeing. […] this is abuse" (88). In Foucault's terms, Heather is exercising her power and authority over Alex by refusing to accept her freedom of choice and by negating everything that makes Alex as an individual truly individual (The Subject and Power). Alex, thus, struggles against her mother's domination and asserts the right to be different by building up her agency.

The constant repetition of open-ended rhetorical questions about her sensed female identity highlights Alex's feeling of insecurity. She is unable to trust her instinct because she has never received support from her parental figures to build her self-esteem, so she continually questions herself. For instance, she keeps questioning her decisions: 'Am I wrong? Is it me? Is it? […] What could we be doing differently? (66) and "Are we always going to be alone, Alex and I?" (152). Her disconnection from her own self is emphasized by the fact that she feels closer to herself only when she is being acknowledged, be it in a positive or negative way, by the Other. She has been chosen to open the school's fashion show because her appearance makes her stand out from the rest of her schoolmates. For the first time in her life, she comes under the spotlight for who she truly is. Not only does this recognition by a model agent boost her self-confidence, but it also gives her the opportunity to reinvent herself: "'Of course, what I have is an opportunity to invent not just myself, but my whole circumstance" (51). She enjoys the appraisal by the fashion community, however, some of her friends are envious of her. Alex senses this resentment but instead of being worried about it, she seems to embrace the negative energy she receives from her friend as an opportunity to feel present: "It makes me more real now that Sierra is jealous of me" (81), and later on :"It made me feel like I belonged somewhere" (110).

Alex, seen as a Bildungsroman hero in this novel, can assume traits of the authentic self of the genre in its traditional form. In the 19th century Bildungsroman, the hero reaches his complete self-fulfillment by becoming a part of the bourgeois society. Socialization, thus, as seen in the first chapter, is among the highest values for the individual of the Bildungsroman. Similarly, Alex's growth depends on her integration in society as a girl, as her true self. Friendship is a part of Alex's Bildungsprocess not essentially due to the support that Alex receives from her three new friends, Amina, Sierra, and Julia, but because it is the first time that she is able to experience a feeling of belongingness to a group of people she

can relate to. In a way, she embraces her otherness by becoming part of a group of friends who stand out from the rest of their peers: 'I am with the exotic chicks, so I guess I'm in the right place" (48). The feeling of community is reflected in her friendship with the girls and her time with them becomes a rite of passage from boyhood to girlhood. Ultimately, the sense of belongingness is reinforced by the acceptance or rejection she receives from her environment.

The iterational element of agency is another interesting aspect of the concept of agency for the intersex novel that can be germane in *Alex as Well*. What is meant by iteration regarding agency is that, either consciously or subconsciously, the individual becomes the agent of actions that are repeated in the past and have an effect in the present and future. Emirbayer and Mische claim that "[e]ven relatively unreflective action has its own moment of effort; the typification and routinization of experience are active processes entailing selective reactivation of received structures within expected situations, dynamic transactions between actor and situation" (976). In other words, habits and repetition shape social structures that are repeated by actors in certain situations. Through Alex's interaction with the girls, it becomes evident that the narrative turns into a space of normative reinforcement where girls and boys behave and respond in distinct ways. Although she admits that she is not acquainted with the socially acceptable behavior of girls, there is no doubt that she feels female. In the novel, Alex's actions seem to reinforce gender stereotypes as soon as she transitions to her new school. Agency, within the framework of iteration, engages Alex in a set of actions that reflect the choices she purposefully makes in order to 'pass' as a girl. When, for example, she is being caught by her friends to lie about her previous school, she bites her lips, scuffs her feet and mumbles "which is what boys do when they don't want to talk about stuff" (48). The implication for agency, in this context, is synopsized in Alex's words when she thinks to herself that she has to adopt more normatively feminine reactions:

"I'm going to go home and write notes, to get it clear in my head, but right now I have to distract them" (49). These conscious choices Alex makes stress the iterational dimension of agency that orients her efforts towards building upon her sense of belongingness. The reiteration of gender appropriate behavior throughout the text seems to sabotage gender fluidity. On the contrary, it highlights gender performativity and the ideology of a heteronormative culture where intersex subjecthood challenges the existing social identities of male and female.

Another instance that manifests the iterational dimension of agency is when Alex's mother bursts into her school and makes a big scene when she discovers that Alex has filed for emancipation. Alex realizes that all the efforts she has put into establishing a safe environment at her new school fall into pieces and she will have to start all over again: "I don't see how I can get away from the old Alex. At least not without a huge effort. He's hanging off me. He's quiet sometime, but he's always there, like a shadow" (186). She will have to take other paths of action to reinscribe herself into the community once again; actions that direct attention and intervention toward another pattern of response that will exhibit her non-normative identity (Emribayer and Mische 1010). In the end, she confesses that it's fruitless to constantly try to mimic behaviors that defy her intersex identity: "But we're not normal. Are we? We're never going to be normal. It was fun to play at being normal" (188). The realization that Alex has been engaging in a set of patterns that habitualize and routinize this female behavior is evidence for what Giddens has conceptualized as reflexivity of the agent's actions. For Giddens, reflexivity is based on the constant monitoring of actions over which the perpetrator has total control; that is, he or she "could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (9). According to his conceptualization of agency, the reflective nature of agency goes hand in hand with structure, which represents the social institutions where an individual exercises their agentic patterns. My reading of the

novel highlights this connectivity between the individual and the structure in the way that Alex consciously cultivates femininity and tries to adopt normative behavior in order to belong to a group and assimilate into the social system as a girl.

Taking into consideration Slaughter's conceptualization of agency as the active participation in one's development and the self-determination of the individual in their identity formation (226), *Alex as Well* becomes, in these terms, a story of self-discovery. The Bildungsroman, here, performs its traditional work which is to demarginalize the marginal subject rendering the individual as the normative subject within a social context. In other words, a person can reach their full potential only if they become part of a social network. To facilitate this connection of the self with the community, Slaughter links the Bildungsroman hero with human rights in that every individual, in their quest for an uncompromised identity, can find the human rights laws helpful. Alex seeks the help of a lawyer, Mr. Crockett, to issue a new birth certificate which she needs in order to enroll herself to her new school. Crockett enables Alex's transition into her new self, an action that expands his role from a lawyer to a mentor figure. He is the one who helps her file for a new birth certificate and get a declaration of emancipation. Crockett offers Alex a way out from the environment of her abusive mother and dismissive father, contributing, thus, to her growth process. As an interpreter of the law, he shows her the way that the law can function as culture (Slaughter 44) in ways that enable Alex to embrace her intersex identity not only personally but also legally. Ultimately, according to Slaughter, Alex is able to attain legal citizenship as an intersex only because she is the agent, in other words, she acts purposefully towards claiming her legal rights. Agency, thus, within this framework is the means that facilitates Alex's journey to becoming part of society in the terms that she defines.

Every person in Alex's life contributes in smaller or bigger part to her formation but there is not one specific character that sticks out in the narrative. Still, the narrative

incorporates the mentor motif operating within the familiar intersex Bildungsroman frame of this analysis and making it possible to read this element as a passage towards Alex's maturation. Mr. Crockett is not, however, the typical motif found in the other novels of this category. Their relationship starts off as a typical lawyer-client relation, but it develops into a father-daughter one, due to the lack of a supportive parent-child relationship in the hero's life. The important part to be emphasized in her formation is not the support she gets from her environment. It is Mr. Crockett who acts as a facilitator towards not only the awareness of her individuality, but mainly the alienation from her family.

In the ending of the novel, towards the end of the process of formation, there is not the slightest indication of reconciliation between Alex and her parents, which leads to the assumption that Alex's maturity is independent of her connection with her roots. She is the sole agent of her journey towards maturation since her parents have chosen to disapprove of her true identity and insist on doing so until the end. Alex recognizes that unless she escapes from the family environment that is unsupportive of her authentic self, she will lose her sense of empowerment and eventually her agency. According to Weedon, the subject loses his/her freedom when he/she is not acknowledged by the social structures: "Non-recognition and non-identification leaves the individual in an abject state of non-subjectivity and lack of agency" (7). The realization of the dangers of losing her authentic voice if she doesn't break through constitutes part of Alex's Bildung because this knowledge is the driving force of her maturation. She is certain about her decision to emancipate, and she realizes that there is no future in the relationship with her parents: "[I] can't be with people who are trying as hard as they can to … to wreck my life" (205). Her emancipation away from the constraints of her family frames her formation and strengthens her authentic, uncompromised sense of selfhood.

As Norbury assumes, Alex is a protagonist who "asserts a narrative of resilience and demonstrates creativity, agency and a positive sense of self" (5). Her empowerment is striking as she is self-assured and confident of her female identity. Her transition from male to female is accentuated in the opening scene with the makeover theme which serves as a marker for her development. The makeover becomes transgressive and symbolic of Alex's wider transformation about to be revealed (Norbury 12). Furthermore, her independence and separation from her family are accelerated by her financial independence that provides her with the ability to make the transition from the familiar home to a space of detachment. Alex's compliancy inside the restrictive setting of the house transforms into a dynamic set of motions outside of it where she is validated by the progressive fashion industry. The passage motif facilitates the narrative as it brings the hero closer to her self-growth and symbolizes the connection with her sensed identity. While Alex is packing her things to move out, doubts about what she is about to do complicate her decision and question her decisiveness. However, as soon as she remembers the abuse that her parents have inflicted on her, everything becomes clearer: "There's nothing else I want from here. I stand there [in her room] again for a minute, trying to remember everything exactly how it is today. One day I'll have to describe it to a therapist" (168). Although the need for psychological support is foreshadowed here, it is not clear whether Alex will need therapy because of the split from the familial bond or because of the realization of her intersex condition.

Alex wants to sever the ties with the past which in the traditional Bildungsroman usually creates a sense of disconnection. In her case, however, because of the constant rejection from her parents, this disconnection does not lead to disorientation. On the contrary, she feels more connected to her true self than ever. Although the return to the past, an essential part of the traditional Bildungsroman, redirects the protagonist to a deeper understanding of the world, in *Alex as Well* the complete opposite is necessary for the

development of the hero. Alex has a deep urge to break the link between herself and her parents in order to come back to herself and to her sensed identity: “Can I divorce them? Like, can I be emancipated, or whatever it’s called? Can I never see them again? That’s what I want. I don’t even want anything from the house. I never want to go there again. I want it to be as though we’ve never even met” (162). Whereas, for example, in *Middlesex*, Cal embraces the past and comes to terms with the trauma he has suffered, in *Alex as well*, Alex’s wounds are not healed and possibly never will be. When Heather is being admitted to hospital, Alex packs some of her stuff in a bag. At that moment there is no emotional connection in the thought of her sick mother. On the contrary, she compares packing her mother’s bag to the final episode of a turbulent relationship:

> This is good - Taking these things of hers and packing them in a bag, as if I am taking memories and packing them in the back of my mind. […] It could be some time before I will think of her fondly. I can’t imagine that right now, but I can imagine imagining it and I’m angry now, but maybe eventually I won’t be. One day I will just be sad for her. It could be some time before I will even think of her fondly. I can’t imagine that right now, but I can imagine imagining it. (201)

In this metafictional framework, Alex seems to only imagine missing her mother in fear of admitting that this relationship is over. She may be afraid to say it out loud but deep within, she knows that the past will remain in the past, and there is no place for her parents in her future life: “It hurts, but it feels like there’s a knot in my heart – it’s just loosened and unfurled. Nothing can tie it back together again” (192).

In one of the few calm discussions she has with her father, she reveals to him that she wants to emancipate because she has been living in an abusive environment all her life: “See, you think I’m being a brat, and I think I’m escaping an abusive relationship” (204). Her

words reveal a certain amount of maturity that a fourteen-year-old teenager rarely has: “I’m going to go and stay with a friend for a little while. It’s my turn to have a holiday from you two” (193). By the end of the novel, she recognizes herself as an equal member of her family and wants to take a break from them in the same way they have. The demand for time away from her parents seems to be the result of her turbulent and often violent journey to maturity, or the product of her agency. All in all, the trauma she has suffered seems to be the motivational force for what Butler has named as “the condition for a new political agency” (After Loss, What Then? 467). Alex might never recover from her trauma, but instead she transforms this traumatic experience into an agency that will benefit the process of her growing up.

Feelings of guilt and shame traverse the novel complying with the typical thematic of the intersex narratives. Alex feels she is to blame after her father left home since her intention to live as a girl is unbearable for her parents. She feels that she has disappointed her parents, however, there is not a moment in the novel she regrets her decision or is willing to go back to her male identity to please her parents. She becomes the agent of her autonomous self as her true identity prevails against her parents’ will.

7.2 THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER CRISIS-BOND AND PATHS OF ALIENATION

The Bildungsprocess of individuals who do not embody traditional forms of sex varies immensely from that of cisgender young people. In *Alex as Well* the hero’s agency and transformation into an autonomous self is heavily based on the separation from the familial environment and specifically on the disconnection from the mother/daughter bond. Alex’s estrangement from her family leads to her growth away from the authority of the family, the most important power institution of childhood. Her mother, Heather, is portrayed as a hostile

figure who is unsupportive of her child's choices, dismissing them as a type of adolescent rebellion. Heather is a powerful, imposing mother who doesn't make Alex's life easy. Throughout the narration there are eleven intertwined chapters that unfold Alex's mother's point of view. These chapters comprise parts of a mother's forum entries where Heather expresses her confusion about her child's identity. She shares her experiences of intersex parenthood on the online community of 'www.motherhoodshared.com' where the reader becomes aware of her disassociation and broken relationship not only with her child, but also with her husband, David. Her entries reveal the point of view of intersex parenthood and are paradigms of the solidified gender norms that the intersex adolescent has to overcome in order to become a free-willing agent.

As my discussion about agency in the previous section has already shown, Alex's bond with her mother plays a fundamental role in the formation of her character. The dramatic confrontations between Alex and her mother that are peppered throughout the narrative stress the complexity of the relationship and its importance in Alex's journey towards maturity. It is Heather's hateful nature that disturbs Alex and makes her feel unsafe at home as the betrayal she experiences is a measure of the distance she feels from her parents (Feder 62). The unsafety climaxes when Alex decides to file for emancipation in order to escape this shattered relationship: "She's a liar, she's totally unpredictable and she seems absolutely intent on ruining everything that is important to me. Who does that to their own child? She's a crazy woman. I don't want her in my life anymore. We don't want her anywhere near us" (179). Heather's disparaging, often mean, comments to her daughter raise obstacles to Alex's maturation process. According to Phillips "the use of humiliation, destruction of self-esteem or distortion of facts can destroy the adolescent's psychological growth" (54).

The fact that throughout the narrative Heather addresses Alex mostly as a boy reveals her unsteady character and her unsupportiveness of Alex's decision. Her lack of empathy and inability to express any kind of compassion broadens the distance between herself and her child. Deep inside she might know that she is wrong to insist so much on Alex being a boy. However, she even calls him a cross-dresser although she is aware of her child's intersex condition from birth. It is as if she denies Alex's identity and chooses to see what she only wants to see: "I look at Alex and I don't think I love him. I know that if we had a normal child our lives would be so much better" (26). Heather's lack of empathy and often neurotic behavior culminates the mother-daughter conflict which does not reach a resolution by the end of the novel.

Phillips suggests that the special bond between mother and daughter is a catalyst for identity formation:

> Tension between mothers and daughters allows daughters to define their own boundaries more clearly. Through fighting with her mother about what she wants and believes, an adolescent daughter learns about herself and how to cast off childhood. She learns how to define her differences with her childish self. She learns how to define her difference from her mother. It is the mother who pushes her to become an individual. (52)

Alex's identity formation is developed through this strenuous relationship that causes the estrangement between herself and her mother. The mother-daughter bond is constantly based on negative experiences as Alex's intersex identity and decision to defy her mother's will is a source of distress for her mother. This strenuous relationship is typical of the relationship between the adolescent daughter and her mother. In the end, the problematic relationship is rejected by the child as Alex realizes that remaining at home would be translated into the curtailment of her freedom to define her own identity. The mature daughter doesn't see her

mother in a new light and the symbolic separation from the mother figure establishes the ways that Alex's growth can evolve.

Alex characterizes her mother as 'a nutbag' more than once. This characterization is not random, of course. The concept of madness is spread throughout the narrative as the retreat from reality is seen as a solution to the problems both for Heather and Alex: "Am I too hard on her? I know teenagers are bratty and rude. Is my mother the reasonable one? Because I genuinely believe that I am right and she is wrong. She seems so totally scattered to me" (159). In the end, Heather is admitted to the psychiatric unit since her denial of Alex's reality leads her to tune in to the comfort of her inner voice. Heather closes herself off from her child and makes a conscious decision to remain within her comfort zone. Similarly, Alex admits that she has been thinking about taking drugs in order to find a solution to her problems. She confesses to her mother that she was being bullied at her old school and she shows her the video some of her schoolmates had made of her. She is so embarrassed that she doesn't want to watch it again and admits that the thought of taking substances and escaping this life has crossed her mind: "In fact, the reason why I haven't taken drugs like that is because I know that it would be so good to be out of my head that I wouldn't be able to stop. […] I'm totally in the zone" (129). Luckily, she is aware that this solution would only be temporary and soon she would have to deal with reality again.

Heather believes that Alex is not aware of her true male identity and tries to secretly put the hormone pills in Alex's food. She seems to be drawn away from the reality of Alex's intersex condition and truly thinks that the hormones will bring her boy back: "My mother has the delusion that I can change, that it's some naughty thing I am doing to annoy the crap out of her because I am a teenager and one day I will wake up and I won't feel like I am a girl trapped in a boy's body" (22). In this regard, Heather crafts the illusion that undergoing hormone treatment seems to become a coming-of-age ritual for the intersex individual

(Norbury 10). The mother-daughter relationship is depicted in the novel as an undoubted failure since Heather refuses to face reality and is incapable of creating a safe environment at home with an intersex child. While most of the times Heather behaves hysterically, dropping on the ground and screaming at Alex, she does try to show some affection which Alex does not feel as real: "My mother is not hugging me to make me feel better, she's hugging me to convince herself that she's not a bad mother . . . It's so generous of her to still be able to love me despite my deformity. I can see her congratulating herself" (30). Heather, on the other side, believes that everything she does is for Alex's own good: "I do have Alex's best interest at heart" (115). Her intentions are clouded by the negative effect her actions have on Alex, and so any attempts to mend their relationship are futile. Ultimately, Heather's narcissism transforms her into a victim of the situation as she believes that Alex's behavior is intentionally directed against her. Indeed, it is part of Alex's coming of age journey to learn to live without the safety in her relationship with her parents as I will demonstrate later in this chapter.

In *Alex as Well* identity construction lies heavily on the reflection of the self in the mirror resonating with Lacan's mirror stage that "typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image" (13). In many instances the reflection of the female Alex in the mirror causes arousal to the male Alex and then he/she starts to masturbate: "Alex and I are the one person, but I feel like two people, and this is the problem. It's always been like that, but since I stopped taking my medication five days ago it's so totally clear that I can't be the other Alex anymore" (19). Alex recognizes that there are two personalities living in the same body by looking at her reflection in the mirror, a process that establishes the Lacanian 'Ideal ego'. Through the reflection in the mirror the male Alex's desire for the female body is initiated and sexuality is only possible for the male part of herself. It is evident, thus, in the text that sexuality and desire are attributed only to the male Alex depriving Alex, the female narrator,

of her sensed identity and of her sexual expression. Here, it is possible to claim that Brugman has failed to manifest the representation of an intersex embodiment able to desire and be desired. Instead, Alex's bodily materiality relies on social recognition and on normative rules. The formation of a coherent self is reconstructive and seems to ignore the materiality of Alex's intersex body since she is always dismissive of "his small noodle", a word Alex's mother first used to name his penis. It is a word Alex continues to use highlighting her repulsion and rejection of this part of her body.

In novels with intersex representations, as seen in the beginning of my analysis, abuse and violence are common features that permeate the narration. In the previous section of the analysis of the novel, I look into the theme of abuse in the sense that it limits Alex's spectrum of agency. Interestingly, abuse in *Alex as Well* appears in more unpredictable ways. Firstly, Alex is often verbally abused by her mother as she calls her 'a pervert' more than once. Secondly, there is more than one incident where Alex is being violently abused by her mother: "She grabs the phone and starts beating us with it. I shrink away but she hits me on the shoulder about six times and then she misses me and gets the wall" (32). Later on, when Alex tells her that she has enrolled in a different school, Heather has another explosion: "She pokes me in the chest so hard it hurts. 'You don't get to make these decisions!' she hisses. 'If you have a problem *mister*, you come to me, and we'll talk about it. *I* make the decisions around here. Do you understand me?" (52).

Additionally, the readers are presented with another act of violence that is largely self-inflicted by Alex. As stated in the beginning, the dynamics between the two Alexes are fragile and both identities successfully exemplify gender stereotypes. The male Alex is sexually active, provocative, and flirty and the female Alex is passive and tries hard to feminize her behavior and appearance. After a makeover at a beauty salon, the male Alex is aroused and starts to masturbate upon seeing the refection in the mirror: "Then I look at Alex

and I can tell what he is going to do next. Don't you dare I say to him, but he already has his hands down his pants . . . I hate it when he does this. It's so gross. It's a real boy thing to do . . . He looks at me and sees a hot chick . . . I look at him and see a chimpanzee tugging on his little noodle" (12). The ostensibly clear division between the two Alexes is contrasted in front of the mirror that is the archetype symbol of the confrontational site with the self. Alex, the girl, whose felt gender is female, and Alex, the boy, whose embodiment tilts towards maleness as he has a penis and no breasts. That the mirror is the only place where sexuality is reflected brings forward the complicated issue of sexuality of the intersex individual followed by an ironic implication by the author. It is rather the heterosexual normativity that Brugman sees critically through the episodes where the male self is aroused by the female one. Through this lens, the episodes where the male Alex gets aroused by the sight of the female self can be interpreted as acts of violation of Alex's sexual image.

Ultimately, the novel seems to be missing a major pattern typical of the Bildungsroman, which is love. It can be assumed that Alex's split personality poses an obstacle to her experience of feelings of love towards another individual. The male Alex is a constant reminder of her ability to experience desire for her female self, causing agony and confusion. However, her conscious self demonstrates with an adult certainty her sexual orientation and desire for girls. For example, Alex is very fond of her friend Amina but throughout the narrative her fondness does not metamorphose into love. As a result, experiencing sexuality, which is a marker of empowerment and thus adulthood, is not a passage Alex crosses.

The ending of the novel could be interpreted as a striking example of a postgender reading of the narrative as the reader is left with a sibyllic phrase. It does not follow the Hegelian teleological ending but leaves behind a meaningful openness. Although Alex has already decided to identify as a homosexual female, her last words reveal that gender is not

what matters at that point. When she leaves school and after having been harassed by a schoolmate, Alex seems to have accepted the fact that her intersex embodiment will always draw people's attention: "[P]eople are always going to give me a hard time. I might even get beaten up now and again. But there are worse things than people you don't care about not liking you" (210). Despite the verbal and sometimes physical abuse she experiences at school, she feels self-confident and beautiful because a giant billboard of herself is put just out the front of her school: "I laughed because out of the front of this school is a giant billboard. It's me up there, arching my eyebrow, in a bowler hat, with the drawn-on moustache, blowing a kiss". Yet, the closing sentence is the marker of the intersex agency Alex represents as she concludes "It's me up there, dressed like a girl dressed like a boy" (210). It is possible that Brugman wants to articulate the possibility for a 'neither' and 'both' sex that Alex can achieve. But her bodily autonomy is asserted only within a non-heteronormative frame of desire – since she identifies as lesbian – and not within a non-heteronormative frame of sex. What is sure, nevertheless, is that Alex is able to define who she is and by the end of the novel she is fully empowered. After having rebelled against her parents' authority, she belongs to the intersex people who having not undergone surgical intervention seem to find some balance of identity despite dichotomous cultural models (S. S. Turner 470). She believes that she is subverting the paradigm and that her whole existence is as fluid as art can be: "I'm subverting the paradigm in ways she [Heather] can't even imagine. We are art, says Alex" (78).

Alex has created an environment for herself away from bigender norms that her home comes to symbolize. As it seems in the end, her separation from her mother highlights that her intersex identity and her choice to identify as female is off-limits to the heteronormative identity her parents want her to adopt. Having only the basics in her new room, Alex does not complain, as this emptiness facilitates the connection to her inner self: "I have a mattress on

the floor in my room, and a bag of clothes in the corner, and that's about it. The room is so empty there's an echo" (208). The hollowness of her domestic space facilitates the redefinition of her identity in her own terms, creating a state of tabula rasa that reinforces her agency. Whilst her empowerment as an adolescent is projected, the reader discovers another crucial piece of information that becomes pertinent to Alex's Bildung. The echo that the empty walls reverberate brings more clearly into view that the other Alex has fallen into silence and that Alex has been able to renegotiate her intersex identity. Consequently, Alex's agency, within a heteronormative environment, is directed against social oppression and towards a retreat to the sensed self.

The Bildungshero of the intersex novel is not a static figure. The transition from a point of departure towards a point of arrival reveals a dissatisfaction with how the intersex body is perceived in the place of living and a need for reaffirmation of intersexuality. It can, however, signify a transition on the gender continuum where the intersex hero moves from the assigned gender of birth to the other opposite:

> The departing from one geographical place to arrive at another as symbolizing a 'departure' from one bodily/identitarian place to 'arrive' at another conceptualizes the gender transgression in terms of a binary notion of gender, in which there are two fixed gender categories (male and female) cast as either the 'point of departure' or the 'final destination'. (Amato 182)

While this interpretation might reinforce notions of bigenderism where both the point of departure and that of the final destination refer to femaleness and maleness, the passage/transition pattern in the intersex Bildungsroman hints to a broader meaning of mobility in general. For instance, a journey from innocence towards experience or a disassociation from the rejective family environment.

Similar to other novels of this study Alex neither challenges gender ambiguity, nor identifies as intersex. The transcendence of society's bigenderism is not accomplished in this novel as there is no doubt in Alex's mind that she feels like a girl and adjusts her appearance and behavior to match the socially accepted conventions of female subjectivity. In this sense, the novel reifies essentialist concepts of gender and sex in a normative frame as Alex's first birth certificate stated that she was born female, and Alex now thinks that transitioning into a female gender seems the only normal/natural thing to do. Rodriguez traces this twist in the narrative by contending that Brugman is "de-queering" the novel as she is "falling back onto socially prescriptive notions that enforce the idea that females are supposed to be girls and males are supposed to be boys – in short that gender is ultimately dictated by biology" (22). The psychological development of the hero, a typical element of the Bildungsroman, is shown only as far as her emancipation is concerned. There is a silent acknowledgment of the limits of knowledge of her condition which leads to an embracement of culturally acceptable gender representation. That said, Alex's Bildung can be perceived as incomplete since her growth and her functionality within her culture are the product of only a part of her true identity.

8 JANE HOPPEN'S *IN BETWEEN*

> If she knew nothing else, Sophie knew that she had been born as she was meant to be: Biology.
>
> - Jane Hoppen, *In Between*

Jane Hoppen's *In Between* (2013), like *Golden Boy*, tells the story of a teenager's journey from innocence to the struggles of being born with an intersex condition. In 1963 Sophie was born with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome in an American town in the Midwest. Five days after her birth, her male parts were surgically removed with the consent of her parents. In spite of her mother's initial hesitation, her parents agreed to the surgery that would easily sort the ambiguity, following the doctor's recommendations: "'If you raise your baby as a girl, she'll identify herself as one,' Dr. Jacobs said. 'You'll need to guide her on her way – dresses and patent-leather shoes, hair ribbons and Barbie dolls. You'll teach her how to cook, knit, sew. You'll have a little girl"' (24). The doctor's advice strongly echoes Money's early gender reassignment protocol that has been analyzed previously in my theoretical chapters. At the age of two, exploratory surgery was performed on her, and the doctors found out that the cervix hadn't developed properly so she would never be able to have children. Until the age of eight she regularly had to have vaginal dilations, procedures so painful that Sophie had blocked them out of her memory. When she was fourteen, she accidentally found out that when she was born, the doctors could not identify her sex. She demanded that her parents tell her the truth about her medical condition and after that the narration focuses on the ways Sophie tries to make sense of her intersex intelligibility. The result of this apocalypse has a dramatic effect on how Sophie negotiates her self-development within and outside of her family environment and affirms Lev's note that "[f]amilies built on secrecy and shame are not healthy places to live in, even if the intentions are protective" (41).

Sophie grew up in a loving environment where her parents were always looking out for signs that their child was different but the truth about her intersex condition was kept a secret from her. Once revealed, everything falls apart: Sophie's sense of belonging, and the ostensible serenity among the family members. At that point and until Sophie finds a way to deal with her corporeal reality, the functioning family bond that supports adolescent identity construction is missing.

In *In Between* Sophie is seen to relate to her social context as have her predecessors in the traditional Bildungsroman. Her journey towards finding meaning in her life as intersex is key to establishing a beneficial relationship with her surroundings. One of the basic principles of the Bildungsroman is finding harmony within the mechanisms of society. In search of this harmonious balance Sophie materializes what Castle has described as "intersubjectivity – life with, for and through other people" (36) as the constituent part of one's identity. In the end, and through multiple inner conflicts and psychological turmoil, the narrative finds Sophie in a harmonious balance not only with her intersex identity but also within the social setting and her relationship with others. The identity construction, although challenged at many levels by Sophie, is, in the end, part of her Bildungprocess reminiscing the paths towards growth of the traditional Bildungshero

8.1 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND LIVING WITH LOSS

Hoppen's novel shows that the process of Sophie's Bildung and identity construction is primarily informed by pain, loneliness, and loss. Her intersex identity starts being shaped abruptly and unexpectedly the moment she finds out the truth. From then on, grief about the lies she had been told, the identity she was about to renegotiate, and an endless desire for normality is what inform her fragmented selfhood. In my analysis I am preoccupied with how the mechanisms of Sophie's identity construction function and how in the end she embraces

her intersex identity and makes amends with her corporeality. Sophie's primary goal seems to be finding the answers to shaping an intelligible identity and her journey revolves around one main question: What is intersex and who am I? Led on by her curiosity to learn more about her condition and compelled by the desire to discover that she is not the only intersex living organism, she studies Biology at university and does research on the species that share hermaphroditic characteristics in nature. She discovers that there are tribes that, much like what I have reviewed in Chapter Three, dismiss heteronormativity and embrace different sex variations: "Some groups of people would think to have a word for her as she was born to, rather than try to surgically fit her into the only words that existed" (192). In her search for answers, Sophie becomes aware of the cultural constructedness of genders and that the demarcation between binary sexes is not a medical necessity but is based on social and aesthetic imperatives which drive the whole medicalization mechanisms of the intersex body (Amato 128). The social and cultural collective, as an important source of influence on the individual, is what is missing while Sophie is growing up. Having lived a life in secrecy she is constantly looking for an intersex collective, a cultural concept where she would be acknowledged, and she would find the similarities other people like herself share with her: "She believed if she studied hard enough, search long enough, she would find answers about her birth, the biology that had been undone" (184). Ultimately, she wants to reclaim the power she lost when the medical authorities decided who she should be and how her body should look like without asking for her consent.

Among others, *In Between* realizes many of the principles of the novel of formation: "[t]he thematic element of formation, along with change, understanding (epiphany), formative experience as a process of biological and intellectual growth" (Golban and Benli 45). However, *In Between* particularly assumes one of the most fundamental archetypes of the Bildungsroman: the quest for identity and the journey in search of knowledge. As the

narrative unfolds, the process of identity formation becomes harder and harder for Sophie, because she has lost her point of reference. Weedon's relational concept of identity construction informs my reading of the text, especially Sophie's difficulty to make sense of who she is, given the fact that she is unable to specify who she is not: "While it is possible to be a subject without identification, identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not" (19). The linkage between identity formation and its relational reference is based on the supposition that identity is formed in front of a mirror of antithesis. We define ourselves by the opposite; by mainly what we are not. I find Weedon's concept of identity formation compelling as an approach to the literary depictions of the construction of the intersex identity studied in this dissertation because it sheds light on the frustration of intersex intelligibility. If one cannot be defined in an either/or axis of engendered identities, how can they mark their difference and define their self-perception? "She thought about everything she knew about herself, the truth finally fully disclosed – how she was born, what had been done to her, what she was left with, what she never would have. She had never before felt what she was feeling in that moment - as if she were sinking away, into a pit she could never crawl out of" (107). Since Sophie's identity, as she had known it until then, is deconstructed, she is unable to define the matrix upon which her whole existence can be livable in new terms. This conception of identity allows for the exploration of how Sophie's identity, and the other identities of the intersex protagonists of the novels in my analysis, are fictionally constructed maintaining at the same time their real conceptualization.

Family dynamics play a crucial role in the construction of the intersex identity in the intersex Bildungsroman. In *In Between* the challenges Sophie faces, although culminating after the revelation of her intersex condition, become apparent from a very young age. In the intersex Bildungsroman identity construction lies primarily in the synthesis between

individual agency and influence by family and society. Ultimately, from a source of reassurance, Sophie's parents turn into a referential point of disassociation as she feels: "hollow, a shadow of herself, alone with her aloneness – lonely" (128). She perceives her parent's concealment as a betrayal which is mainly the reason, she experiences the emotional estrangement from the world. She "realized she trusted none of the adults in the room, even her parents, to make any decisions for her anymore" (100). The feeling of loneliness is a feeling shared by all the intersex individuals once the truth is disclosed to them. All the heroes in the novels of this study experience resignation and distrust in their families as soon as they realize that their lives have been built on lies, and so does Sophie: "She felt distrust, abandonment – rigid, hard, raw, ravaging – coursing in her, in all of her, her arms and legs stiffening, her stomach hardening, her flesh heating up, her hands curling into fists" (69). Her feelings become somaticized in this vivid depiction of her intense emotions. Her suffering from head to toe is indicative of how important a positive parent-child relationship is and of how much this relationship hinges on trust. It becomes clear that the lies and secrecy about all the medical treatments have turned Sophie's life into a lie as she believes that "they are all liars" (69) and she is no longer capable of counting on anybody who comes close to her.

There is a distinct distance she creates from the world and from her family as she realizes that her identity was built on lies. She spends almost five months in total isolation in her room, in a mentally dark space and it seems that she will not manage to pull herself from it as she believes that "[to] not tell someone the truth of how they were born is insane. That's like pushing someone off a cliff of craziness" (24). The notion of insanity is also commonly dealt with in the intersex Bildungsroman because the revelation of an intersex identity during adolescence creates such an enormous amount of commotion in a person's life that the mental load is hard to struggle with. Sophie's compares it to a "total erasure" of her identity: "But her, and others like her, had their genuine existences erased. Sophie never would understand

why others couldn't see that they should have left her as she was born – different, but whole" (256). In terms of cognitive psychology, such a violent event can lead to identity fragmentation and a schism in self-perception difficult to be revoked.

The narrative, here, guides the protagonist through a rite of passage, typical for the Bildungsroman. Sophie has to suffer an unhealable wound as she grieves over her lost identity signaling the loss of innocence. During a moment of awakening, she cuts her hair short and boyish, and the narrator guides us through Sophie's journey of initiation as "a battle of her own" and as a "sacrifice of her own history" (108). The allusion to her own battle provides a new perspective on how she will find a place in society again. Alongside, the use of the metaphor of cutting her hair as a sacrifice of her history is noteworthy as it suggests Sophie's rebirth. Following this, she tears apart the album her mother kept over the years of her childhood, evidently trying to erase her inescapable past. Meditating on her sensed identity, Sophie realizes that she is "all mixed up" and she proceeds with a dramatic illustration of her scattered indeterminacy: "I feel like there were two cans of paint and they spilled together, and that's me inside. One fucking mess. That's how I feel!" (159). Indeed, her fragmented self goes along with Morris' remark about love and recognition: "[t]he need to be loved and accepted for who we are is fundamental, yet this is denied to someone who is told lies and who receives the message that she is unacceptable through both actions and words" (11).

Whereas, after some time, the truth sinks in as a cognitive process, Sophie has gone through many alienating experiences. She has stopped talking to her parents, she refuses to eat, and she sinks her sorrow into alcohol. The process of her transformation functions as a catharsis although she does not show this attitude out in the open. She gradually goes back to school and resumes her old life, but she has become another Sophie. She has become distrustful, and she is always cautious not to reveal her intersex identity. The narrative stages

the challenges involved as she graduates from school and wins a sports scholarship for university. Although it may seem that her life is back on track, she subconsciously tries to explain how and why she was born an intersex. Growing up in the 1970s makes it even harder since there is not much research and intersex communities were obscure. A literary critic who has offered a model for portraying the progression of intersex intelligibility is Eva Feder Kittay. She suggests that there is a strong link between intelligibility and recognizability that can satisfy one's deep need for a sense of normality:

> But still more profoundly the desire for normality is about a self-regard that arises from being recognized as who we wish to be recognized as, and as the distinct individual we know ourselves to be. It is about an acceptance into a community and a sharing of one's life with others, either the community into which we have been "thrown" by birth or circumstance or a community that we have chosen to embrace. (Thoughts on the Desire for Normality 105)

Not until the final chapter of the novel does Sophie feel that she is accepted and loved for who she really is. It is also then that she decides to let her body be seen by another person. Until then, she had constantly avoided getting involved into any intimate relationship in fear of the gaze of the other.

On the other hand, the heterodiegetic narration informs the reader about the difficulties Sophie's parents have faced since the moment their little daughter was born. Doubts about their decision to agree with their baby's corrective surgery never stopped crossing their minds. Deep inside they have always been worried about when and what will happen once Sophie discovers she was born intersex. In a fashion similar to the other texts examined in this dissertation, Sophie's parents are aware that their child has been robbed of her agency and her body self-determination as is common for intersex babies: "One day we'll

have to tell her everything, and I don't know how we'll do that, explain what kind of life we've chosen for her" (60). Mary, Sophie's mother, cultivates a child-parent relationship based on protection and comfort because she is well aware that Sophie deserves the truth. She was never convinced by the doctor's reassuring words that Sophie would lead a 'normal' life. Of course, she was always on the lookout for any nonnormative pattern of female growth in Sophie. In a scene, which is highly reminiscent of Money's theory about gender roles, Sophie proves that the doctor's reassuring remark that she will never know about her corrective surgery is already falling apart. At the age of four, when little Sophie insisted, on several occasions, on peeing in a standing position, Mary was watching her in dismay. Her caring nature was fighting a constant battle with her reason and what she had been told by the doctors about gender roles: "As much as Mary wanted to let Sophie do whatever she wanted to in that moment, she kept her on the toilet seat, convincing herself that she was doing the right thing" (39). Hoppen's text addresses here, in a very succinct matter, issues of body essentialism and she offers valuable insight into the essence of what it means to be intersex. While the dominant discourse is binary, it becomes obvious that when it comes to the construction of the intersex identity, repetition of performances is not enough to instill specific gender roles.

Mary feels incapable of protecting her child. She regrets having agreed to the surgery and she tries to support every decision Sophie makes although "[s]he had no idea how to guide her own daughter on her way, and she wished that just once she could protect her. She felt she would never be able to protect her enough" (165). While Mary was raised in a strict Catholic environment and her mother is always reprimanding her about missing out on many sermons, Mary is gradually drawn away from religion because it seems that her church doesn't provide any space for her intersex child. In a similar vein as in *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite*, religion and intersex pull in opposite directions: "Her [Sophie's]

truth challenged so many of the church's dogmas, and Mary had grown to feel as if she no longer wanted to blindly accept the priests' sermons, all of them blatantly reviling anyone who was different, like a constant cloak of darkness" (164). Her shift towards religion is further accentuated as "Sophie's birth had taught her that nothing was as clear-cut as it appeared, and she no longer felt driven to join the parade of condemnation" (164). Until the end of the novel Mary is unable to forgive herself and she can't escape the feeling of having been complicit to her daughter's abuse by the doctors. Also, Mary is at a loss when she wants to talk to Sophie, as she had done with Sophie's sister, about sex education: "Mary had no idea what to tell Sophie about sex; everything she knew about it seemed irrelevant when it came to Sophie" (132). Nevertheless, as opposed to Alex's mother in *Alex as Well*, Mary's open-mindedness and her sense of empathy turn her into a comforting mother figure from the beginning until the end of the narrative. The text provides many opportunities which show that Mary is a good-natured mother who will always feel guilty of not having protected her child and who, until the end, goes above and beyond to empathize with her daughter's challenges: "We're going to be there for her no matter what. We owe her that. We owe her more than we can ever give her" (168).

As Sophie grows up, the literary text creates more formative experiences which are not limited to the adolescent period. It is a shared feature, among the rest of novels in this study, that the intersex Bildungsroman displays the protagonist's experiences during the early years of adulthood as central sources of knowledge as well. Gradually she becomes aware of her condition and gathers more and more information from medical books about other cases like hers. There is an underlying agency that evokes her desire to delve into a rationale behind her intersex condition and moreover to acknowledge and be acknowledged by others like her: "She knew that some people like her didn't know they were, and she couldn't imagine being left to live in a body you would never understand, with no explanation

offered" (257). Her inquiring nature can't let her live without finding out the facts about her syndrome. Her mother accidentally finds a family album hidden in the attic of her parents' house that reveals that one of her great grandmother's sisters was born female and after some years she reappeared in the family tree as a man. This discovery, but mainly the fact that Sophie's intersex syndrome may be hereditary, brings the family together in ways that didn't seem to be possible in the beginning. As her mother experiences a feeling of relief but also of responsibility at the same time, Sophie finds a way to come to terms with her parents and her corporeality: "Sophie realized as she spoke those words that was the first time she had not blamed her mother and father for her life, and looking at her mother, Sophie knew she had never understood the burden of that blame" (210) and "she realized her mother and father had been plagued with guilt, the fear of the unknown, the weight of their decisions, since the day she was born" (211). The conceptualization of a solid self is informed by the acceptance of the familial bond in *In Between* where it is assumed that the formation of Sophie's intersex identity is mediated through the important influence of the role of the family.

By the end of the narrative, the reader finds Sophie having reinvented herself as an intersex homosexual woman in her late twenties, feeling accepted by her family and close friends and feeling ready to start an intimate relationship with Maya. While family matters have an intrinsic effect on the intersex identity formation, intimacy and sexual desire inform Sophie's corporeality in multiple ways.

For the intersex, the absence of language to describe the self and their experience can have a tragic effect on their life. It contributes to the devaluation of their lived experience and the tension of a constant feeling of trauma. Even gender-fluid and gender-queer language, for example, the use of neutral pronouns, can lead to "feelings of isolation and disconnection from others" (Losty and O'Connor 10). Sophie compiles a table with the linguistic characteristics that could work for intersex people, for instance pronouns other than 'he' or

'she' because she realizes that there is no provision in language for someone outside the binary of male and female. Lorde has also spoken about the power of language that has been made to work against people who do not conform to the normative discourse (43).

8.2 Memory And Corporeality. The Longing For Intimacy

There is an abundance of flashbacks in the novel that relate to Sophie's memories of her treatments and uncover the mechanisms of how the intersex identity is reshaped during adolescence. Unlike the traditionally linear narration of the Bildungsroman, *In Between*, previsualizes the Bildung of the intersex protagonist as a result of knowledge of the present and reliving of past experiences. In other words, the memories of a traumatic past burdened with ambiguous medical treatments come to haunt the hero's present as soon as the truth is revealed. In the narrative, I propose that Sophie's memories mirror her delayed Bildung and self-awareness as her memories conceptualize "both the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility" (Caruth 153). During one of Sophie's visits to Dr. Willit, after having discovered that she was born intersex, she recalls her traumatic experiences at the hospital: "Sophie remembered hating to go see Dr. Willit when she was little. She remembered crying and screaming, and her mother begging her, and her body being tired and hurting, but the memory was blurry, an image behind a veil that she couldn't clearly see. As much as she wanted to know, part of her was grateful she couldn't remember any more than she did" (100). My approach to memories as a thematic concern in the intersex Bildungsroman falls in line with Caruth's note on how the flashback functions in psychology and psychoanalysis: "The flashback, it seems, provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thought. While the traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection" (Trauma: Explorations in Memory 152).

The repressed memories have created a marginalized space of loss and trauma of the gendered self which, after having been exposed to corrective surgery, cannot be inhabited anymore. According to Moya's account about the connection between experience and identity, "identities both condition and are conditioned by the kinds of interpretations people give to the experiences they have" (41). Sophie's inability to enact her past, emphasizes the void that is crafted between her sensed and actual corporeality and highlights what precisely Caruth means by an individual that "literally *has no place*" (153).

Similar to *Golden Boy*, as discussed in Chapter Six, and simultaneously deploying Foucault's argument about heterotopia, I argue that in both novels – *Golden Boy* and *In Between* – the flashback memories create an uninhabitable space, a heterotopia that provides "a system of opening and closing that both isolates and makes penetrable" (Of Other Spaces 26). As soon as an intersex baby is born, an alternative, heteronormative existence is created, and the silencing motif, which is reiterated by doctors and parents, is initiated. The motif of secrecy and lies typically seeps through the narrative and magnifies the importance of a social and cultural recognizability of the intersex child. As medical processes dehumanize the intersex child, a hybrid in between space has to be created to accommodate the new corporeality of the surgically fixed body. Sophie's limited scope of her past experiences with the medical community blur her disposition towards her intersex identity. The distance this blurriness creates complicates her relationship not only with others but with herself as well as "[a]ll she remembered from her childhood was pain, cold steel poking and prodding. The memories were stored in her body's muscles and bones" (192). Feelings of discomfort and distress guide her through her journey towards her new selfhood after the realization that she had been surgically fixed into a body different from the one she was born in.

The parallel drawn between the importance of memory and experience deserves some reflection as it raises issues of body intelligibility that eventually drive back to my

understanding of intersex through the lens of body essentialism. The narrator's attempts to establish connections between identity formation, experience, and memory, I argue, explain the fragmented, and most of the times, conflicting relationship Sophie has with the girls she desires and iterate what Losty and O'Connor define as the "cognitive challenges that emerge when attempting to assimilate the complexity and diversity of the non-binary conceptualization of gender into existing gender schema" (17). Sophie's inability to experience a love relationship unconditionally has its roots in the severed connection to herself and her parents during adolescence. This tension results in the revival of the repressed trauma every time someone tries to get close to her.

Another similarity with Max in *Golden Boy* is the fact that Sophie has also been a victim of violation. Here, the perpetrator is the medical community that performed a number of feminizing genital procedures and sex normalizing interventions. Rape, although not literal in this context, takes a metaphorical form in this novel. Her follow-up treatments include regular vaginal dilations, a procedure that has been identified as an experience similar to rape by many intersex individuals who have come forward about their 'normalization' treatments (Intersex Issues in the International Classification of Diseases: a revision 8). Cosmetic surgeries involve clitorectomies and vaginal openings which, as reported in many intersex narratives, most possibly put in jeopardy their erotic sensation and deprive the intersex body of experiencing sexual desire. This amputation has been the reason of trauma for the majority of these people but nevertheless it does not transform them into heterosexual beings that fit comfortably into the binary. Holmes explains that "having my genitals mutilated has made me no less intersexual; it has merely made me a mutilated intersexual—just as a woman who has her genitals mutilated is still a woman, as a person who loses a limb is still a human being" (In(to) Visibility: Intersexuality in the Field of Queer 225). Paradoxically, intersex case managements reinforce gender boundaries by insisting on erasing the intersex from the

medical map. Medical intervention on Sophie's body continues throughout childhood and renders her body a space that cannot be inhabited by herself anymore: "[T]he child who cannot be identified at birth as 'either' male or female becomes their body through a process of objectifying hyperembodiment, rendering them a physical site that is open for an unusual level of intervention by medical practitioners and family" (Grabham 43). By losing her autonomy she ends up growing up with feelings of an amputated body while at the same time her identity is negotiated by everybody other than herself. Reports on the procedure of vaginal dilations that have to be continued for a long time, even forever in some cases, shed light into matters of body autonomy and self-determination for the intersex individual: "Intersex organizations have received personal reports from parents that they feel they were raping their children, intersex women have reported that they have felt coerced into raping themselves with these practices" (Tukker 6). As a result, and as Amato examines, the intersex individual experiences abuse and violation in a twofold manner, both as nonconsenting medical procedures on the intersex body but a "violence involved in the definitory power of assigning a gender" (Amato 137).

Sexual identity construction as a thematic element is a sine qua non in all intersex narratives as it is considered the starting point of making sense of a consciously unintelligible identity. The intersex Bildungsroman shows that growth is simultaneously a psychological and physiological process (Gillis 277). Sophie has been explicit about her sexual orientation since she was a teenager. Although she grew up with Will, the neighbor's son, and they shared their first kiss together, Sophie has always shown interest in girls. There are two love relationships in the novel that are deeply sensed as transformative experiences. The first one is during adolescence with Shana, her best friend, who is portrayed as a sensual, bold young girl. Although Shana has been going out with boys, she discovers during the last summer before senior high school that she is homosexual. In any case, there has been an implicit

eroticism between Sophie and Shana all along. Especially from the moment they played out a scene from an erotic novel they loved to read, and Sophie gives Shana a passionate kiss for real. That is the first time in the novel that Sophie expresses her sexual desire for a girl openly. However, as soon as she realizes what she has done and after Shana's hysterical reaction she feels utterly ashamed: "[she] felt embarrassed, wanted to disappear. She didn't want either Anne or Shana to think she was *that way*. She silently reprimanded herself: *What is wrong with you?*" (46). Even before finding out about her intersex identity, Sophie had felt the longing for Shana. More importantly, however, after the disclosure of her intersex identity she started reflecting on her desire and sexuality: "She didn't undress boys with her eyes. She did it to girls she liked all the time, trying to envision how they looked beneath their clothes. If she did like girls that way, she thought it might be because of the way she was born. Maybe it was the boy in her – was there a boy in her? – who liked girls" (153).

When after some time it was Shana's turn to make a move on Sophie, she pushed her away not because she didn't have the same feelings for her but because she was afraid of her reaction once she would find out about her: "As much as she had fantasized about Shana, she was petrified at the thought of actually being close to her, taking a chance that she would one day want to…see her" (154). Although Sophie was explicit about her intersex condition to Shana, she never let her see her naked. Despite Shana's efforts to become intimate with her, Sophie would always turn her down.

In essence, notions of intersex visibility haunt all the texts examined in this study as I have earlier mentioned. The symbolic importance of exposing the intersex body to someone other than the medical authority reinforces the vulnerability of the intersex body. Meyer-Bahlburg accurately observes that people with intersex conditions are frequently faced with a range of problems including "body image problems associated with ambiguous genitalia or with the beginning development of gender-contrary secondary sex characteristics in puberty;

questions about sexual orientation; [and] gender insecurity or doubts about correct gender assignment" (22). In an effort to familiarize herself with her body and to experience sexual pleasure Sophie observes her genitals in the mirror and masturbates frequently in the privacy of her room. By making the private act of masturbation public to the reader, the narrative here refers once again to the invisibility of the intersex body as, similarly to Wayne's masturbation in *Annabel*, Sophie allows for her genitals to be seen by the reader but not anyone else in the text (Dykstra). As the title of this Bildungsroman indicates, Sophie is caught in between two versions of herself as her sensed selfhood depends on the fact that she feels "like the body [she] was born in ... like both - female and male" (232). Sophie's fear of being exposed reveals the discontinuity between corporeality and identity and magnifies an emotional and bodily dissociation that also reflects the fear of her intersex sexuality. The underlying pathologization of intersex desire that is implied in this part of the narrative is confuted later as Sophie encounters Alice who will serve as her guide to unlock her intimate desire. In the end, Sophie's relation with Shana fades away as Sophie goes to college and breaks up with her.

Throughout the narrative Sophie's relation to her sexuality is only allowed in secrecy and in silence with her own body as self-pleasure although "every part of her ached to be near someone, touched" (261). The fact that she has been unable to express her sexuality in a relationship with another person resonates with the difficulty intersex people find to initiate a sexual partnership. On the contrary, the denial to be seen by others transforms into a hyper awareness of herself with her own body. Once she is told the truth, there are many instances where she spends hours looking herself in the mirror in an effort to possibly compensate for the lack of intimacy in her life as "she couldn't imagine anyone wanting to touch her" (114). The reader becomes, thus, an eyewitness to the intersex most private body parts and is involved in a space where no one else is allowed. Losty and Connor translate this retreat to

the self into a process of healing: "Although there may have been a sense of protection in being unseen, this position also seemed to foster feelings of rejection, invalidation, isolation and perhaps a longing to be seen" (13). Healing, here, is not necessarily synonymous to 'healing from' but it connotes the acceptance of the intersex corporeality seen through the mirror (D. Hester 48). Sophie, therefore, finds contentment in satisfying her sexual desires with masturbation, an expression of the love she longs for by others. Her journey to self-discovery presupposes a high level of bodily association as a survival tool. As a result, the survival strategy she adopts to help her though her identity quest is a hyperaware embodiment of her intersex self.

After Sophie's graduation from school, she moves to New York to go to college. The recurrent motif of mobility from a rural setting to a big city is iterated at this point of the narrative. In New York, she finds a new home where she hopes to be able to satisfy her need to find others like her. All in all, she has always had visions of living in a big city "where she would either meld in unnoticed, streets filled with bobbing heads and shoulders, or where she might meet others born as she was born" (161). The invisibility motif is yet again the structuring principle that guides Sophie away from her homeland and into a vast metropolis where she feels that she will disappear into the crowds. Not only does she want to remain invisible, but she insists on keeping everyone she meets at "an arm's length away. No one got any closer than that" (257), in fear of revealing to them her genuine self.

In 1990, 27-year-old Sophie is working at the Central Park Zoo and is still on the lookout for others like her. The Sinners is a bar where people who are in the middle of gender transition hang out. There, in a heterotopic place, in Foucault's terms, that is inhabited by people *in between* - just like herself -, the illusion of her yearning desire to belong is projected and becomes evident. In her never-ending search for an intersex community, she

claims this bar as “home” (257) as it appears to become a locus for her identification. The Sinners becomes a sanctuary for Sophie, who goes through an identity crisis ever since she found out about the way she was born. The trans community, although, as mentioned in Chapter Three, not strongly affiliated with the intersex one, is the one Sophie feels more comfortable to call home and it is the place where she finally finds “a world within this world” (257). In that space the “male-female structure so carefully constructed and delineated” (257) shows its cracks and contradictions. She regularly takes refuge in that place where her need to belong somewhere is satisfied: “She felt she fit better in that world than any other she had found” (258). Her experiences with the queer and trans community turn, after all, into her way of questioning and negotiating her identity.

A crucial encounter for her journey to self-perception is the one with Maya who she meets at the Sinners. Maya, a transgender woman, flirts with Sophie and at their second and last meeting at the bar they become more intimate. Sophie, who is not yet sure about whether she would be sexually attracted by a transgender woman, is charmed by Maya’s interest. However, as soon as she touches Maya’s body and her fingers navigate to her breasts “her stomach suddenly wrenched, and her throat closed, her body lurching backward” (278). Her whole body was engulfed by an intense sense of “repulsion”, and she felt sick “as if she might vomit” (279). The story provides at this point a valuable opportunity to understand how Sophie’s distorted self-perception functions and how it affects her assumptions about society and culture. There is some sorrow in the realization that “Maya hadn’t repelled her, she had repelled herself. As much as she always wanted others to, she had never accepted herself” (279). The hostility she felt towards others had turned into a hostility towards herself as her constant quest for the truth had made it difficult for her to form a cohesive sense of identity. The incident with Maya undoubtedly incites the awakening moment for Sophie since her reclaim to power and her realization can be perceived as a step towards identity

reconciliation. The ostensible acceptance of her intersex identity crushes down once she is confronted with her own truth. The encounter with Maya reflects the confrontation of Sophie with her own reality and implies that only after Sophie deeply realizes and accepts her identity, will she be able to make space for another person in her life.

She suddenly comes to realize that she had been the first to perpetuate the idea that something about her was fake and not normal which is reminiscent of the ways the imposter syndrome creeps in. This goes along with Kittay Feder's suggestion about the interrelation between intelligibility and normality: "We fear that without normality we move outside of the recognizable and so the cognizable. When we move beyond or outside the normal, we fear the loss of intelligibility, intelligibility that at once serves as a condition for our own self-regard and as a precondition for another's love and desire - even as love and desire necessarily move beyond the intelligible" (108). With Sophie's realization, the writer's investment in the body essentialist apprehension of intersex is once again reflected. Sophie's final remarks after the awkward episode with Maya signal her acceptance and surrender to the matters of biology: "Even though she and Maya were different, detail-wise, they, and others like them, were all the same. Even those born *normally*, of one gender. They were all the same. They were all biology" "[…] Sophie knew that she had been born as she was meant to be: Biology" (279).

Having deeply experienced the relation with herself after the incident with Maya and reaching a high level of self-acceptance, the final chapter finds Sophie more self-aware. There the narrative brings attention to the second and most influencing romantic relationship that Sophie gets involved in. Alice, a homosexual single mother is the woman with whom Sophie will eventually feel the freedom to expose herself. There is an instant mutual attraction the moment they meet at a bookshop. As their relationship progresses, their intimate moments become more frequent which puts Sophie once again at a crossroad. She

has to decide if she will let Alice into her world or if she will shut down and surrender in her aloneness. In the beginning Sophie does what she knows best: She pushes Alice away as she feels extremely vulnerable in her arms. The enumeration used to describe Sophie's feelings highlights her emotional instability as Alice is getting too close to her: "She breathed quickly and felt panicked, afraid, open and vulnerable" (297). At the thought of Alice discovering her intersex corporeality only one question crosses her mind: "How could she really love me? (298). However, after some time of reflection, as Sophie realizes that she is in love with Alice and wants to trust her with her truth, the writer's need to bring a closure to Sophie's Bildung and identity formation becomes evident. The text attends to the issue of Sophie's Bildung by invoking Lorde's remark about the individual's visibility which at the same time makes him/her vulnerable but is also the source of their strength (42): "She glimpsed herself in the mirror, and she smiled. Sophie smiled, and just before she opened the door, she spoke to herself, to her reflection in the mirror, to the woman about to enter. 'Hi,' she said. 'I'm Sophie'" (301). Informed by the thematic pattern of the Bildungsroman, *In Between* provides a closure to the identity formation of the hero with the final acceptance of an intersex corporeality. The essentialist reflection in the mirror signifies, interestingly enough, Sophie's maturity and her accommodation in her intersex identity.

To sum up, *In Between* explores the frustrations and challenges the intersex hero encounters and the cognitive processes she undergoes as she sets out on her journey towards the intelligibility of her intersex selfhood. Sophie's journey exemplifies the ways "a promising youth might go toward putting his severed parts all together" (Jeffers 42) and the realities she is confronted with as she struggles to fulfill her identity formation.

9 JEFFREY EUGENIDES' *MIDDLESEX*

> Biology gives you a brain. Life turns it into a mind.
>
> - Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*

Middlesex is the most popular of the six novels of transformation that I analyze in this study. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2003 and also received the Ambassador Book Reward and the Great Lakes Book Reward.

The beginning of *Middlesex* is riveting in its own acting as an introduction to the whirling trajectory of Calliope's life. Calliope Stephanides[30], the narrator and protagonist of the novel, is a third-generation Greek American who grows up in Detroit, Michigan in the 1970s. The omniscient narrator is Cal, who narrates his adolescence in retrospect. He is in his forties, identifies as male, and resides in Berlin. Eugenides dedicates the first half of the novel to Calliope's immigrant grandparents and their incestuous marriage while arriving from Asia Minor to the States of the Great Depression in the 1920s. The novel provides plenty of historical events including the Turkish invasion of Smyrna and others, which the narrator blurs into the story omnisciently. The warp and woof of historical events comprise the biggest part of the first half of the novel. Her grandparents' settlement in Detroit and their witnessing of its transformation into the grand Motor City develops as Calliope's parents meet and get married, all entwined with instances of the race riots in 1967 and the family's move to suburban Grosse Point, Michigan. The second half of the novel bears many similarities with the Bildungsroman in which Callie is reared as a girl and spends her childhood observing the hilarious, at some points, Greek American traditions. The novel is set on binary axes of all sorts: Greek and American, black and white, male and female,

[30] I will refer to Callie or Cal using the respective gendered pronouns according to the respective appearance of the character in the novel. 'Cal_lie' will be used when the protagonist is mentioned without any chronological reference in the narrative.

superstition and science, tradition and progress, nature and nurture. These discordant concepts entertain the idea of fixed dualities throughout the novel clearing the ground for the challenge of the boundaries and the actual repositioning of the protagonist in a state of in betweenness.

During her adolescent years, she perceives the atmosphere around her with an almost suspicious doubt which makes the reader slowly understand that Calliope is not like all the other girls. Callie, short for Calliope, is injured by a tractor and at the clinic she is discovered to have a mutation of her fifth chromosome which makes her look like a girl, although she has biological and hormonal traits of a boy. Her parents, Milton and Tessie, take her to the Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinic, where her intersex identity is revealed. At age fourteen Callie realizes that the doctors, following her parents' consent, are setting her up for a sex reassignment surgery. That is the point when she escapes to San Francisco, where after living as a nomad, she finds herself working for a burlesque show as Hermaphroditus. There she meets Zora, another intersex working at the show, who becomes a mentor for Cal as she sheds light on Cal's condition and helps him through his identity acceptance. The story comes to an end when Chapter Eleven, Cal's brother, finds him in San Francisco to announce the death of their father. Cal travels back to Middlesex where he reunites with Tessie who embraces her child and seems, after all, to accept the fact that Cal now identifies as a male. Desdemona reveals the truth behind her incestuous marriage, and everything falls in place.

In *Middlesex* there is, of course, much overlap between a Bildungsroman and a family saga that grant the novel its 'hybrid' character according to Eugenides' own words. The author has admittedly intended to create a work of a comic epic; on one level a family or immigrant saga that mirrors the progression of Western literature and on another a Coming-of-age story starring a hermaphrodite teenager. Whether his story has achieved a truthful

representation of an intersex teenager's journey or whether it hasn't escaped the mythical misrepresentations of how intersex has been depicted throughout history is yet to be proven.

9.1 MYTHS AND REBIRTH

Eugenides has claimed that his storyline has been primarily inspired by the myths of Tiresias the mythical figure that lived both as man and woman and had superhuman powers, and Hermaphroditus, a symbol of androgyny in Ovid's account (Interview with Jeffrey Eugenides). Reference to ancient tragedy characters, especially intersex ones, is extensive not only in *Middlesex* but also in the other novels of this study as well. In *Annabel*, for instance, Thomasina presents the myth of Hermaphroditus in class in an effort to familiarize Wayne with the background of intersexuality in history. Of course, this is not coincidental. It is suggested that these references define a locus of association and belongingness for the intersex character in the narrative and they draw attention to intersex as a universal narrative theme. The author provides a point of reference for the young hero in a world where the intersex body is rendered unintelligible because "[i]ntersex bodies have genetic, hormonal, and anatomical configurations that cannot be adequately apprehended by hegemonic discourses of sexual difference" (I. Morland 335). Since in mythology intersex people were not only renounced, but most commonly even superhuman powers were attributed to them, it makes no unusual choice that there are narrative references to the myth by the intersex hero during his journey of self-fulfillment.

The affiliation with the myth works as a cognitive example and a way to negotiate the intersex identity. In the Greek tragedies of Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone* and of Euripides *Phoenissae*, Tiresias, the hermaphrodite prophet, establishes a connection between present and future, gods and mortals, truth, and delusion. His duality is what reinforces his

seerhood and "reflect[s] a traditional concern with the duality of human existence" (Carp 280). Tiresias' ambiguous sexual nature is what empowers him and "constitutes a metaphor for [his] prophetic transcendence" (Michalopoulos 229). It is this transcendence that empowers the intersex hero of the present and structures the literary narration of the intersex. Indeed, it is believed that any mythical contextualizing provides a sense of belonging for the intersex and, respectively, the realization that the condition is nor new neither uncommon for the non-intersex (S. S. Turner 475). The myths that inform about a gendered identity development reinforce the universality of the subject matter, turning intersex into a common site of reference. In the terms of the narrative, *Middlesex's* reference to mythology has a precise function since "[a] mythological pattern offers a rigid structural aid, somewhat like the preparatory network of lines, used by some painters" (White 112). The narrative structure is, thus, established in a manner that allows for a mythic embodiment of the character underpinned also by the author's nod to Homer, the muse Calliope and Greek mythology in general.

However, references to the mythic often connote to a pathological visualization of the intersex and attempt to offer a commentary on the medical objectification rhetoric of the intersex as well. Hence, besides belying the notion of intersex intelligibility and covering up the need for a change in the medical treatment of intersex, a mythical representation of the intersex expresses a subversive image of the intersex body that mimics the Other and creates an even bigger distance between intersex reality and the myth. Many versions of the myth of Tiresias associate his mantic powers with his sex change (Michalopoulos) and his ability to have lived experience from both genders. But it seems that any association between intersex and mythology prolongs a pathologizing culture. Koch-Rein accurately points out that "[t]he mythic, metaphoric, monstrous hermaphrodite for all intents and purposes seems to have – for the longest time – eclipsed the existence of intersexed bodies" (242). In other words, the

negative associations that follow the mythical references in the intersex narratives are examined as a repetition of social misconceptions that function as a reiteration of the past mistreatment of the intersex. According to Graham, this process sees hybridity as punishment and shows that the distant past is the only possible source of intersex experience (6-7). When Callie realizes that she will be accepted into normative culture only if she is medically redefined, she denounces the heteronormative demands that reproduce cultural and gender norms: "I had miscalculated with Luce. I thought that after talking to me he would decide that I was normal and leave me alone. But 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. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself" (Middlesex 446).

The motif of the mythical representation of the intersex presides in the intersex Bildungsroman and refabricates the myth of Hermaphroditus and other hermaphrodite mythical characters. This attaches to them additional connotations of the symbolic and reinforces the concept of normative and non-normative identities. Not surprisingly, even the recurrent appearance of the word 'hermaphrodite' instead of 'intersex' throughout the narration is symbolic: Eugenides' decision to use the myth of Hermaphroditus and Cal's continuous use of the word 'hermaphrodite' echo the discussion about the cultural unintelligibility of the intersex by historicizing and mythologizing its existence: "Cal chooses to use the word 'hermaphrodite' and, in so doing, he self-consciously positions himself in a sort of midway ontological space between the real and the mythological, thus endorsing a conservative view which is nonetheless charged with classical literary connotations" (Antosa 69). Cal's conservativism in a heteronormative grid will be further addressed in the next part where I discuss the journey of the protagonist's Bildung.

There are numerous mythical depictions throughout the narration, but it makes one wonder how Callie could ever identify with Tiresias or Hermaphroditus. After all, common

historical background does not necessarily establish assimilation or a common cultural representation. In her case, it more likely connotes to another instance of alienation. In *Middlesex* specifically, the tropes of the freak show and the systematic link between intersex and monstrosity reinforce the concept of normality: "Eugenides affirms Cal's status as a freak for the audience within and outside the novel, offering him up for consumption in order to confirm the viewer/reader's own sense of normalcy" (Graham, See Synonyms at MONSTER': En-freaking Transgender in Jeffrey Eugenides's Middlesex 17). In a metanarrative manner, Eugenides himself questions the mythical connotation of intersex as Cal reflects on the mystical powers of an intersex: "[A]nd the third was always special, exalted, endowed with mystical gifts. . . I tried to fall into a trance state or become an animal. I did my best, but nothing happened. As far as special powers went, I didn't seem to have any. A Tiresias I wasn't" (495). In effect "by mythologizing intersex, actual bodies are placed into a double bind of mythology or pathology" (Dykstra 46) and the tendency to perpetuate the historization of intersex is being reinforced. Callie gets hold of Dr. Luce's notes and reads what he has written about her as a patient. She looks the word 'hermaphrodite' up in Webster's dictionary and finds that 'monster' is a synonym for what she is. Is the act of uttering the word 'hermaphrodite' or looking it up in the dictionary at the library a semiotic mode of self-acknowledgment? The library itself serves as an institution for cultural norms where according to popular belief the authentic truth is represented. Hence, this revelatory moment is when Callie compares herself to a mythical creature and realizes what other people think when they see her:

> The synonym was official, authoritative; it was the verdict that the culture gave on a person like her. *Monster*. That was what she was. What did people do when they came upon Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster? They tried to get a picture. For a second

> Callie saw herself that way. As a lumbering, shaggy creature pausing at the end of the woods. As a humped convolvulus rearing its dragon's head from an icy lake. (433)

The way Callie personalizes the knowledge she has just found out about her identity is the way she will negotiate her intersex identity and she will come to terms with it eventually. According to Stone "[o]ne of the ways our culture erases people is by not having words for them … When there's nothing to describe you, you are effectively invisible" (163). However, I assume here that another way our culture renders unintelligible whatever escapes the norm is by attributing features of the 'abnormal' or the 'Other' to them and by using mythical elements for them.

After facing monstrosity as a synonym for her intersex condition Callie is at a loss. At the Clinic of Sexual Disorders in Chicago, Dr. Luce suggests corrective surgery in a patronizing manner to enforce normalization on Callie's teenage intersex body. Callie decides to run away in order to flee from the medical authorities that would rob her authenticity. After a long journey through the country, that functions as a symbolism of her gender transitioning as well, she ends up in San Francisco where she takes part in a burlesque show at Bob Presto's 69er's Club. She performs naked the myth of Hermaphroditus in a water tank and allows people to satisfy their voyeuristic curiosity by showing her intersex body in public as the "monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy" (Cohen 4). In the chapter called 'Hermaphroditus', the narrative reproduces the common historical theme of the fairs and freak shows where hermaphrodites offered the opportunity, in exchange for money, to be seen detached from the medical gaze and the way they were morally, socially, and legally registered (Mak). The myth of Hermaphroditus is relived in Zora's tent, and Cal performs his part intoxicated, disassociated from his own body, "in a state of half oblivion" (491) to pull through the night. To quote Amato's words about the exposure of the intersex body to the public and its effect on their psychology, "[t]he

uninhibited exhibition of their naked bodies makes them ‘vulnerable victims’, ‘captives’, ‘miserable’, and completely defenseless against any potential observer” (126). In this respect, Callie’s exposure in the water tank is another instance of a perpetual trauma she endures as the gaze of the public provokes the traumatization of the intersex individual, as I have suggested in Chapter Four. Without a question, Cal’s state of accepting his new identity starts with a feeling of emotional detachment and numbness that facilitates his distancing from reality and enables experiencing life as a voyeuristic seduction good for passing time and diverting himself from the pain of the moment (Giroux). Together with Zora, a pre-op male to female transgender, and Carmen, a female identifying intersex with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, Cal, trapped in an adolescent wasteland, becomes part of the show at the Octopussy’s Garden and starts accepting his condition.

The last time the Hermaphroditus performance is recounted in the narrative, Cal is on the verge of escaping the transitive state he has been living in during the last four months at the 69er’s Club. Cal, who is now more aware of his intersex condition, admits that performing the act in the tank is ‘therapeutic’: “Inside Hermaphroditus old tensions were roiling, trying to work themselves out. Traumas of the locker room were being released. Shame over having a body unlike other bodies was passing away. The monster feeling was fading” (494). The protagonist is reborn in the water tank as in the myth of Hermaphroditus and there is an apparent symbolism of water as a cathartic element. Cal washes away his past and resurfaces as a redefined, unambiguous individual as “[t]he surface of the sea is a mirror, reflecting divergent evolutionary paths” (484); by evolutionary paths, the author apparently alludes to hyphenated identities like the intersex ones.

In a fashion similar to the use of the myth of Hermaphroditus, the Minotaur myth is the link between the motif of myth and rebirth that permeates the novel. The author informs the reader that intersex and the mythical have many things in common although there is a

conscious effort to embrace hybridity in a heteronormative world at the same time. Milton's conception happened the night his parents went to the theater to see *The Minotaur*. It's the night the mutant gene will be passed down to Callie which will cause her intersex condition. Minotaur, a half-bull, and half-human creature is a symbol of Callie's hybridity and in-betweenness: "Parents are supposed to pass down physical traits to their children, but it's my belief that all sorts of other things get passed down, too: motifs, scenarios, even fates" (109). Eugenides' foreshadowing at this point in the narrative plays an important role as the reader is yet again predisposed to expect a turn of events.

As early as in the beginning of the novel Eugenides makes a statement about the protagonist's rebirth: "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974" (3). The pattern of rebirth is common in the intersex Bildungsroman primarily because the protagonist is in the middle of a conflicting situation, experiencing a growing dissatisfaction with his/her life which leads to a dead end. In sight of this impasse which is translated into the realization of his/her intersex identity and the disassociation with social norms, there is usually a moment of awakening resembling the typical motif of the female Bildungsroman so that "through a process of self-realization the character is reborn" (Herz and Gallo 65). In all of the novels studied in this thesis the pattern of rebirth is a turning point in the plot because the hero brings into consciousness his/her intersex identity and embarks on a new discovery of the self.

In *Middlesex* the pattern of rebirth is present throughout the novel and in all major turning points of the plot. Rebirth breaks the cycle between past, present, and future since "birth as a concept tends to evoke futurity" (M. Lee 38) and opens up a number of possibilities for the born/reborn individual. Declaring from the beginning of the novel that birth is a recurring event, Eugenides reveals that rebirth is a theme that already runs through

the novel in the first lines of the novel. As Antosa points out, rebirth has a narratological effect as well; Cal, is the 'I' male narrator while Callie is the narrated adolescent 'I' that is observed and normalized by the adult male perspective (Narrating the Intersex Body in Jeffrey Eugenides' Middlesex). One paragraph later, Cal announces another imminent rebirth: "But now, at the age of forty-one, I feel another birth coming on" (3). The protagonist's third birth at the age of forty-one leads to Cal's self-creation in the context of his family story and offers the subject the opportunity to write a new relationship to himself (Kilian). It is his encounter and the beginning of a love relationship with Julie that prompts his rebirth, as it is the first time he opens up and reveals the truth about his body not in order to attract attention, as he did in San Francisco, but to embrace intersexuality in favor of becoming his authentic self.

Nevertheless, Antosa calls attention to the connection of Cal's third birth with a narratorial activity. She assumes that the third birth Cal discloses, refers to his birth as the writer of his family history as only by reconstructing the story of his family will he be able to "delve into his own life, led in-between biology and culture, ethnic dislocation and ambiguous bodily formation, genetics and free will" (77). The narrator's attempt to establish a connection between the protagonist's present and past and his/her identity formation, I argue, is mediated through the motif of rebirth both in its metaphorical and literal concept.

Jung was the first one to hint to the existence of archetypes in literature suggesting that there are recurring universal patterns in all stories and myths across the world irrespective of the historical period. These archetypes function as components of the collective unconscious, a set of collective memory, feelings and behaviors which are shared by all humankind even before someone is born (Stevens 76). According to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, all elementary ideas and behaviors are unconsciously prescribed in the human psyche, making everybody familiar with them internally: "I have called these

motifs ‘archetypes’, and by this I mean forms of images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the Earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as autochthonous, individual products of unconscious origin” (C. G. Jung 50). These universal motifs that comprise the Jungian archetypes “possess the dynamic property of seeking their actualization in the reality of life” (Stevens 85) and are also considered to be found in myths and fiction. The archetypal pattern of rebirth is closely connected to any kind of renewal of the hero and Jung presents five types of the rebirth archetype: metempsychosis, reincarnation, resurrection, rebirth (renovatio), and participation in the process of transformation. The pattern that is apparent in *Middlesex* is the archetype of rebirth (renovatio) which refers to any kind of internal transformation of the person leading to a personal growth: “Rebirth may be a renewal without any change of being, inasmuch as the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement” (C. G. Jung 114). Because most intersex heroes grow up in complete ignorance of their intersex identity, their personality is unequivocally changed after the realization of their ambiguity through a process of breaking free from a society of stigmatization.

Furthermore, the pattern of rebirth is two-dimensional in the intersex Bildungsroman. It is not only associated with the hero’s awareness of his/her intersexual identity, but rebirth takes place because, as Freire has conveyed, “the existential duality of the oppressed” (61) comes into consciousness. The intersex person calls into question the power system that alienates and suppresses intersexuality since it does not conform to traditional bigenderism. This uprising resembles rebirth and consequently “[t]hose who undergo it must take a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were” (Freire 61). In *Middlesex*, Cal is renewed, fully conscious of his intersexuality and ‘strengthened’ through a process of sophisticated transformation and maturity. Rebirth is seen as an act of re-affirmation of the

intersex body which functions as a resignification of the intersex identity and comprises a necessary premise for maturation.

In terms of chronology, rebirth creates a connection between two cycles, one before and one after a specific event. In *Middlesex* rebirth is the link between Lefty and Desdemona as siblings and as a married couple and between Callie as a girl and Cal as an intersex. It's the motif that monopolizes the route of events and that realizes Millard's assumption about the modern Bildungsroman: "[t]he contemporary coming-of-age novel might be usefully understood as walking the line between presenting its protagonist as a newborn who is innocent of history and of depicting a protagonist whose coming of age consists principally of acquiring historical knowledge" (7). Is historical knowledge the key element for the protagonist's rebirth? If historical knowledge includes knowledge about one's family, ethnicity, gender, and cultural background, then the answer is probably yes. Indeed, Cal believes that the transition from girl to boy is easier than the distance one has to cover from being a child to becoming an adult. In the last Chapter of the novel, 'The Last Stop', during Cal's concluding reflections on the changes he made, he clearly admits that "[m]y change from girl to boy was far less dramatic than the distance anybody travels from infancy to adulthood" (520). The importance of the hero's maturation process becomes once again explicit as the narrator emphasizes the difficult journey of transformation. Eugenides implies that transformation is a rite of passage one has to go through in order to survive adolescence.

In a way, rebirth is a transformation that does not necessarily require death: "What happened to our memories?" (520), he asks himself in a metanarrative way of preceding the reader's questions about Cal's transition from girl to boy. And then again, another question: "Did Calliope have to die in order to make room for Cal?" (520). Rebirth is evidently used in a metaphorical way, but the author needs to be clear about it. The possibility of living beyond sexed borders is not imaginary and the total erasure of one's identity is not a prerequisite.

Cal's return to home is suggestive of a rebirth as he closes the geographical gap between San Francisco and Middlesex and is reborn and reconnected with the past of his family that accepts his new identity. This trip is also indicative of a crossing of the border as in the narrative of his grandparents' immigration (Shostak). Cal describes his life after returning to Middlesex in a way that the dominant ideology of sex and gender that prevailed at the moment was not an obstacle in real life: "In most ways I remained the person I'd always been. Even now, though I live as a man, I remain in essential Tessie's daughter" (520). Milton's death and preparations for his funeral most probably precipitated Tessie's acceptance of her child's new identity, although she would rather have things the way they were: "It was not acceptable that I was now living as male person. Tessie didn't think it should be up to me…. Life started out one thing and then suddenly turned a corner and became something else. She couldn't help herself thinking that my arrival was part of some … punishment" (520).

9.2 MOVING FORWARD WHILE LOOKING BACK: THE JOURNEY OF BILDUNG IN *MIDDLESEX*

In the last part of my thesis, I will deal with the concept of Bildung and how it is portrayed during Cal_lie's self-development journey. As discussed in Chapter Two, the understanding of Bildung is significantly time dependent. Bildung has been characterized as transformative and transforming and this is one of the main reasons why the Bildungsroman is still contemporary. My focus will be on *Middlesex* but the general concept of Bildung applies to how all the protagonists of the novels in this study reach Bildung in the process of realizing their authentic selves.

Undeniably, society has become more complex since the first appearance of the Bildungsroman and the assigned value of Bildung at the time. Bildung and self-formation is

not supposed to take the form of a linear progression. Discovering one's authentic self and realizing subjectivity involves struggling through experience, through acting on the world and experiencing the consequences of their actions, through taking on various identities and moving on between conflict, failure, and confusion (J. A. Herdt). Bildung involves cultural and personal rupture since identity is usually prescribed by the outside although Thompson maintains that "Bildung has something to do with the experience of remaining strangers to ourselves" (528).

In the light of my previous understanding of the use of myth in the Bildungsroman, I believe that Giacomoni's suggestion about the close tie between the concept of Bildung and mythology is applicable in *Middlesex* as well: ""[t]he idea of *Bildung* is the result of combining dynamic drive which characterizes the great tension of modernity and the compensating and balancing requirement which often makes reference to Greek myth as a kind of regulating idea, in the awareness of its historic and unreachable nature" (57). Her approach accentuates the intangibility of Bildung, a feature that has raised questions numerous times in the history of the genre. The teleological idea of Bildung that flourished within the middle-class elite of the Bildungsbürgertum, examined in Chapter Two, and its harmonious ending are no longer applicable in the intersex Bildungsroman as normative inclusion of the protagonist in a heteronormative culture is problematic to say the least. *Middlesex*, along with the other Bildungsromane of my study and the modern and postmodern Bildungsroman, suggest other ways of identity formation, education and meaningful social relations for the hero that comply with the cultural setting of the narrative. "Those elements" Castle claims, "that demanded stability and predictable development in the classical Bildungsroman become problematic in the twentieth century. The modernist Bildungsroman carries on the struggle between desire and 'great expectations', but the struggle no longer resembles the dialectical processes so elegantly narrativized in Wilhelm

Meister" (24). Nothing is less predictable than being born with an intersex condition, without knowing how your body can be reconciled in a two sex/gender culture. The changes and the rites of passage Cal_lie, Sophie, Alex, Max, Jameson_Jamie, and Wayne go through during adolescence construct a picture of Bildung and character formation that have important implications for a return to the genre and the idea of Bildung in a new approach. This new approach includes slipping back into the past and searching for a reconnection with the past childhood trauma that will compensate for the intersex hero's loss of innocence.

"Everything about Middlesex" Cal notices, "spoke of forgetting" (273). Forgetting the body, one was born in, forgetting homeland, forgetting past identities. From a narratological perspective Eugenides makes an important remark about memory and its role in Cal's present life with the use of the theme of the moral retrospect. This element is more often than not found in the traditional Bildungsromane where narrator and protagonist are the same person placed at a narrative telos and being able "to judge and interpret his own activities in the light of his later, greater wisdom" (Lawrence, Seifter and Ratner 210). This morally reflective process functions as an indirect indication of the return to one's memories and its meaningfulness in the Bildungsroman. Cal's current city of residence, Berlin, is indicative of his torn identity: "This once divided city reminds me of myself. My struggle for unification, for *Einheit*" (106). Berlin's hyphenated civic design clearly illustrates the liminality Cal's whole existence is grounded in. Divided Berlin acts as a mirror for his divided identity and his endless quest for unification. A unification that becomes a key element for his being that essentially comprises the concept of a Humboldtian Bildung which is growth, transformation, and never a given thing, a quality (Giacomoni 56). As the plot of the Bildungsroman is rooted in the quest motif "in which the hero moves teleologically, and the story usually ends with the completion (or failure) of the heroic task" (Feng 2), the motifs of the voyage and return in *Middlesex* present a possibility for closure and self-acceptance for Cal/lie but in the end, they

form a trajectory of a subversive Bildung. The narrator's return to his childhood home sets on memories from his childhood that may inform the reader about a failed transition from childhood to adulthood. This failure seems to correspond to the failure in the dialectical relation between self and society as Cal opts for a heteronormative identity in the end.

As previously said, the personal and social reconnection that makes for a large part of the protagonist's identity construction is very commonly achieved with the use of the quest motif. Cal seems to be in constant search of belongingness; maybe this is the reason, why in the end, he identifies as a heterosexual male and casts a shadow over his intersex identity. For this reason, *Middlesex* has received considerable criticism; for embracing a heteronormative perspective that reinforces intersex unintelligibility. When Callie falls in love with the Obscure Object, her desire is rationalized within a heteronormative rationale that highlights gender performativity: "Cal's behavior is within the spectrum of normative female heterosexuality so long as female sexuality is assumed to be innately passive and male sexuality innately active: hence, heterosexuality becomes something which men 'do' to women" (Carroll 123). Also, Lowe argues that the concept of Bildung lies within a journey of disruption of the individual with the social order and the eventual acceptance of the same social order: "The primary form for narrating the development of the individual from youthful innocence to civilised maturity, the telos of which is the reconciliation of the individual with the social order . . . a narrative of the individual's relinquishing of particularity and difference through identification with an idealised 'national' form of subjectivity" (Lowe 98). In this sense, Cal's Bildung can be characterized as successful considering that Cal's reconciliation with the social order drives him into accepting the heteronormative culture that provides no space for the intersex individual.

Nevertheless, Bildung in *Middlesex* is portrayed as subversive in the way that subversiveness is interpreted in Butler's *Gender Trouble*: "For a copy to be subversive of

heterosexual hegemony it has to both mime and displace its conventions" (Butler, The Body you Want: An Interview with Judith Butler 84). *Middlesex* does question heterosexual normativity through the projection of an intersex teenager but at the same time it reconceptualizes the same hegemony as in the end Cal chooses one of the two normative genders. Callie's intersex identity emerges during adolescence, but it quietly submerges during adulthood. What the novel ultimately achieves is a rethinking of the concept of gender normativity and an esoteric reconsolidation of the power system that is irreconcilable with cultural practices.

There is a certain significance of formative Bildung stressed in Eugenides' novel that affects identity formation especially with regards to freedom of will, ethical choices, ethnicity, and sexuality. In the chapter named 'Wolverette', education prevails for all members of the Stephanides' family. Callie's parents buy the 115-volume set of the Great Books series and decide to read the Canon. Chapter Eleven grows big interest in the Vietnam War and when his draft number is announced he decides to enroll at University as he was opposed to the war. And Callie's Bildung takes yet another turn as she experiences all the stages of bodily changes during intersex adolescence. The dynamic character of the idea of Bildung resembles the concept of *paideia* in ancient Greece that becomes a manifest of Greek heritage in *Middlesex*.

The similarity between the two major themes of the novel and how Eugenides plays with them is noticeable. According to Giannaris the dominant theme of the novel "is the need for the preservation of the national and traditional identity of the Greek, while, at the same time, an 'anti-theme' responds to the need for an unavoidable assimilation" (54). I argue that the effort Callie's grandparents make in order to maintain their Greek ethnic identity in the States, resembles Callie's effort to discover and assert her intersex identity within a heteronormative matrix. However, at the same time, cultural assimilation is more than

noticeable in the Stephanides' family and surroundings. Gender assimilation is also salient in Callie's case as in the end she chooses the male identity and dismisses her intersex one in public. The fact that the intersex identity is not a socially viable possibility for Cal/lie highlights the novel's gender assimilationist approach. There are several instances where gender assimilation is performed in the novel especially after Cal's return to Middlesex and his acceptance as a male by his family. For instance, when Chapter Eleven takes Cal's suitcase out of the car he suddenly realizes that Cal isn't his little sister anymore and "enjoys the paradigm shift" (519). He drops the suitcase and lets Cal carry it on his own as "he was taking [Cal's] metamorphosis as a brain teaser" (519). Additionally, Cal realizes that if he chooses to identify as a man, he should embrace all male features in order to avoid humiliation: "I couldn't become a man without becoming The Man" (518). Echoing a neo-humanist approach of Bildung where there is an implication that there is an ideal that each individual should aim (A. Miller), Cal chooses to perform masculinity all the way as it is clear that the world's norm is based on heteronormativity. It is a conscious decision not to live in-between the sexes as an intersex; a decision that underlines Cal's masculinity although Callie still lives inside him and surfaces "like a childhood speech impediment" (41) that symbolizes an unsuccessful rite of passage from female to male. When he checks himself in the mirror, all he sees is "a forty-one-year-old man with longish, wavy hair, a thin moustache, and a goatee. A kind of modern Musketeer" (42).

Subversive though the education in *Middlesex* is, it still fits the concept of Bildung of the modern Bildungsroman as Callie's going astray and away from home in search of her identity become part of her education. Cal/lie's journey of identity development and his never-ending quest to discover his cultural and inner experiences lend the novel a flavor of postmodern Bildungsroman and Bildung that underlines the *raw material* of Bildung: "Exposure to and engagement with the world and its culture in the broadest terms and in its totality" (A. Miller

338). During his first days as a male Cal realizes that the essence of his identity is rooted in an esoteric integration of his experiences as he admits: “I was fleeing myself. I felt that I was saving myself just as definitively […] and I didn’t know what would happen to me in this new world to which I’d come” (443). Cal’s Bildung that shapes him as an individual seems to bear the promise of a reconstruction of the world he was born in. Finally, and according to Jeffers “the ability to recognize a story of Bildung depends […] on the story’s imitation of patterns of development endemic to the race itself, the psychic round the ego must pass through, analogous to the biological round the body must pass through” (Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana 54). In the twenty-first century, Bildung is in a deep crisis, and it is hard to attain, but thinking within a Bildungsprocess framework can. In theory, Bildung affects the entire human being - mind, body, and spirit - to “become” what he/she will be. Bildung moves from the outward self to interiority, and from the inward self out to the public sphere. It connotes a “shaping and molding of the self, both of the body, as the individual passes through adolescence, reaches adulthood and ages, and of the mind, as ideas are explored, modified, and adopted. The complexity of Bildung is that it can be conceived of as being both static and fluid at the same time” (Kushigian 23). Concrete and life-changing experiences produced by Cal/lie’s journey into adulthood mold his/her Bildung and realize an un-/settled possibility of intersex intelligibility.

10 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

In this study I have examined the function of social constructions of gender and sexuality in the process of identity formation in six literary texts, published between 2003 and 2013. The close reading of the texts have focused on the ways the intersex Bildungsroman invites its readers to see the world differently offering new pathways for social organizing. All the selected texts, the study has shown, represent intersex identity formation as a transformative experience that enables the intersex protagonist of the Bildungsroman to see beyond simple oppositional boundaries. Interactions with family, the environment and social institutions shape the individual experience of coming of age of the protagonists in Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* (2010), Lianne Simon's *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* (2012), Abigail Tarttelin's *Golden Boy* (2013), Alyssa Brugman's *Alex as Well* (2013), Jane Hoppen's *In Between* (2013) and Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2003). In my discussions, I have attempted to bring the novels into dialogue with theories of identity formation, Bildungsroman tradition, queer phenomenology, biological essentialism, and trauma theory among others.

The Bildungsroman Debate was explored in Chapter Two as contemporary forms of the genre not only stress its continuing power, but also reclaim its reflection of authenticity. Overall, what came into view is the fact that although the Bildungsroman has been representative of normative development and departing from childhood and arriving to adulthood, alternate ways of growing up beyond heteronormativity extend the norms of the traditional Bildungsroman which was occupied mainly by male characters. The sociological studies that were reviewed in Chapter Three bring into surface the need for a reconceptualization of intersex identities that will render their existence intelligible. In addition, bioethical issues that derive from the current medical practices of intersex treatment

were discussed and the medical management of the intersex body was explored in detail. I pointed out that biological essentialism and postgenderism make it possible to understand the issues at stake when intersex intelligibility is being challenged within the heteronormative matrix.

To date, there is no literary canon regarding the intersex Bildungsroman, however, there have been continuous publications of intersex narratives in the frame of medical sciences, popular culture, and the LGBTQ movement, which have made the intersex issue accessible to a wider audience. An in-depth reading of coming of age novels of the twenty first century brings into surface certain commonalities in themes, motifs, and symbols and allows for establishing an umbrella-term for these fictional narratives. It is here suggested that these Bildungsromane fall into the category of the intersex Bildungsroman, a sub-genre of the Bildungsroman that offers a reimagination and reinterpretation of the intersex paradigms in literary narratives.

The protagonists' understanding and realizing their intersex selfhood offer new ways of thinking and being and destabilize the heteronormative hegemony of medicine and culture. Of course, they do not depict journeys of identical personal development. These stories provide opportunities to re-read the novels through the lens of a contemporary Bildungsroman where Bildung means turning back into the past and searching for a reconnection with the past childhood trauma that will compensate for the intersex hero's loss of innocence. But the texts also challenge, interrogate, and create a more complex picture of intersex identity formation and intersex intelligibility. My research into the six novels can disperse the notion of the Bildungsroman in many different ways.

A text that prompts careful consideration of gender identity construction and the invisibility effect of the young intersex adolescent after having been medically managed as an

infant is *Annabel*. I have argued that Winter's novel can be seen to foreground the links between intersex and disability studies as intersex is often perceived as a sex disorder; one that is discursively essentialized by medical and political justifying power. Chapter Four sheds light on the reasons behind the association of intersex with the diseased and/or the Other. Moreover, mobility and the journey motif take on further meaning, as the story of Wayne challenges and re-writes the heteronormative ideologies prevailing in the provinces and his journey away from the homeland symbolizes his journey back to retrace his lost identity.

I have argued that *Confessions of a Teenage Hermaphrodite* gives us a radically different take on intersex identity construction and the function of an esoteric voice. The hero's frustration becomes obvious as her multiple personality disorder facilitates a disconnection from reality. In Chapter Five I examine how Simon explores the links between intersex and religion and creates the hybrid character of Jamie_Jameson to give a voice to the oppressed intersex teenager in the nineteen sixties. As Christian faith is being challenged, the protagonist finds space to explore new possibilities of being through belonging to the community within which the gendered identity is represented as a de-pathologized intersex identity. The lost time of adolescence is being revoked as there is a constant reminder of an either/or gender intelligibility and a repetition of gender performance that reverberates the dominant discourse of heteronormativity.

In Chapter Six *Golden Boy* depicts the loss of an integral identity and it is a story overloaded with symbolism and signification. The narrative focuses on trauma and its repetitive nature as not only rape, but also the oppressive nature of normalizing medical practices make Max a character that resembles a big open wound. Trauma studies and specifically Caruth's trauma theory enables an analysis of the traumatic incidences throughout Max's life and the crippling effect they have on the dynamic shaping of his

identity. However, traumatization need not necessarily conclude in a state of involuntary, deeply conflicted silence (Balaev). Constructed within the heteronormative hegemony, the intersex identity is closely tied with the individual's experiences with the medical authorities that are in charge of controlling the intersex body. Lacan wrote about the subject formation during the mirror period. Corrective surgeries that are performed during that period "precisely because of the fear that a parent will not relate well to a child with an atypical sex anatomy—that is, will not serve as a good mirror—that normalizing genital surgery remains the standard of care" (Feder 96). Ultimately, Tarttelin's novel echoes Money's conservative agenda of his theory of "gender roles" and the denigration of intersex autonomy.

This thesis also approaches the concept of autonomy and individuality by exploring the iterational dimension of agency and its function in Chapter Seven. *Alex as Well* emphasizes the importance of maintaining the adolescent voice which ultimately becomes an integral part of the novel's authenticity. The author's experimentation with the representation of the characters portrayed in the narrative shows that multiperspectivity can shed light in the agents of intersex character development. What is more, Brugman's text shows that the mother-daughter relationship, almost always complicated on its own, assumes an essential role in the development of the intersex identity. My understanding of the novel reflects on how abuse within the family, largely controlled by mothers, can revoke other coping mechanisms of the individual and lead to the loss of the authentic self.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter Eight, Hoppen uses the Coming of Age genre to showcase the eternal battle between social pressure and isolation on the one hand, and self-determination and acceptance of the intersex selfhood on the other. *In Between* portrays the trajectory of Sophie's Bildung as being informed by loss, pain, and loneliness. A narrative that renegotiates intersex identity after having been subjected to forced medical treatment challenges the medical establishment and becomes a starting point of the resignification of

intersex subjecthood. The novel offers different ways of negotiating intersex intelligibility and coming to terms with bodily and physical pleasure. Intersex intimacy, a rather under-represented topic in literature, is a central point of reference in the novel. In the end, Sophie finds new terms to reinscribe herself and turns into a protagonist in the process of becoming recognizable to herself.

In the finale of this thesis, in Chapter Nine, I argue that *Middlesex* explores the shifts of discourse in intersex. There is vast scholarship on the novel as a body for intersex representation. This scholarship provides helpful context from which I start looking into the dialectics of Bildung. I have focused on how the topoi of rebirth and myth provide representational space for the protagonist's identity positions through the trajectory of the narrative as the exploration of Bildung succeeds by drawing upon mythology and the rebirth motif. In a concluding remark, I assume that the metaphorical concept of rebirth functions in *Middlesex* as the final stage of the identity formation of the hero that brings a closure to his maturation process, and eventually his Bildung. However, although Eugenides plays with the concept of rebirth in *Middlesex*, the affirmation of the intersex body is not successful. In the end, Cal 'chooses' the male identity and actually reaffirms past misconceptions regarding the intersex and normative discourse. Ultimately, the novel "seems to challenge social constructions of gender and sexuality only to remain entangled with a heterosexual grid" (Antosa 69). In the end, the presence of a coherent intersex self is not successful as self-reflexivity, an important characteristic of the narrative, revokes theories of biological essentialism and postgenderism, reaffirming, thus, ongoing issues of heteronormativity.

Fueled by the analysis of the six intersex Coming of Age stories, in my work, I have explored the theoretical boundaries and the conceptual limitations of the Bildungsroman genre. As the project has progressed, it has become apparent that the six literary texts challenge and/or reject the normalization processes forced on the intersex individual. The

protagonists' understanding of their identity and sexed embodiment is appropriately delivered as a narrative of personal development that reformulates the traditional Bildungsroman genre. Although I cannot claim that every text of this thesis follows the same pattern of personal development, it has been argued that the Bildungsroman is well suited for the renegotiation of contemporary discourses of intersex identity development.

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