

Fragmenting and defragmenting gender identity: An analysis of intersex gender identity performance in Jeffrey Eugenides *Middlesex*

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Abstract

Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *Middlesex* is a hermaphrodite coming-of-age narrative often critiqued in the literary field for its depiction of unstable gender identity performance from the intersex perspective. The novel depicts its main protagonist, Cal, as having an unstable gender identity throughout the narrative, performing his gender in ways that conform to extreme heteronormative gender standards. However, little scholarly attention is given to how Cal's gender identity is fragmented in this unstable portrayal and how his exploration of gender identity performances in the narrative allows for the defragmentation of his gender identity. This paper aims to highlight Cal's gender metamorphosis in Eugenides' *Middlesex*, working through his gender identity performances in their various states using Irvine Goffman's presentation of the self and Judith Butler's gender identity performance theory. Selected instances of Cal's gender performances from childhood, adolescence and adulthood were textually analysed to examine the gender norms conformed to in each performance. Cal's performances of gender during childhood and adolescence conformed to extreme heteronormative standards of feminine beauty, female heterosexuality, and female biology. However, in young adulthood Cal begins exploring gender identities, allowing for the onset of his metamorphosis. During adulthood, Cal's gender is presented in ways that conform to heteronormative standards of masculine appearance, male heteronormativity, and male biology. It is this dramatic gender metamorphosis that allows Cal to stabilise his gender identity and that allows *Middlesex* to present the intersex condition as having a stable gender identity. It is this perspective of the novel's depiction of gender that should be.

Keywords: gender identity, gender performance, identity fragmentation, defragmented identity, *Middlesex*.

1. Introduction

Jeffrey Eugenides' (2013) *Middlesex* is commonly described as a "hermaphrodite's coming-of-age memoir" (Shostak, 2008, p. 381) that follows Calliope's narration of three familial generation stories, going back and forth between the generations'

experiences. The focus of this paper, however, is on Calliope's narration of their own life as a hermaphrodite. Calliope is born with the "5-Alpha-Reductase" deficiency (Eugenides, 2013, p. 3), which is a deficiency that makes Calliope intersex or "Pseudohermaphrodite[s]" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 3) – Calliope appears female on the exterior, but has internal male biological make up. As a result of this, Calliope's narration depicts his/her struggle to find his/her gender identity and sexual orientation. In doing so, Calliope is depicted performing various unstable gender identity performances from childhood to adulthood that tend to sway between conforming to extreme heteronormative standards of femininity and masculinity and the sexology linked to the female and male sexes (Hsu, 2011). It is this dramatic, unstable state of Calliope's gender identity that can be seen as a journey of gender metamorphosis, allowing Calliope to transform into Cal. Focusing the analysis on these unstable gender identity performances, this paper aims to discuss Calliope's gender metamorphosis into Cal using Irvine Goffman's (1956) presentation of the self and Judith Butler's (1988) gender identity performance theory to illustrate how those unstable gender identity performances allow for Cal to defragment his gender identity into a stable gender identity.

2. Theoretical approach

Looking at Calliope's gender identity performances, the performances themselves are a means to present an aspect of the self. Goffman (1956) takes a dramaturgical approach in arguing that people perform their identity or their self like actors on a stage acting out a specific character or aspect of their self. He suggests that individuals examine the situations they are in and who is watching them to decide how to present their self in that situation (Goffman, 1956). Thus, people inherently present a different version of their self depending on the situation they are in and who they are presenting this self to. Because of this, the presented self is constantly changing subject to the situation, the context, the audience, the socialisation agents, and the accepted societal norms (Goffman, 1956; Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel, 2016, p. 77). This argument builds on George Herbert Mead's notion of the self as a product of social construction dependent on the environment surrounding the self, the people in that environment and the regulating social norms of that environment (Goffman, 1956). Therefore, Goffman's (1956) theory of the presentation of the self proposes that individuals examine the situations they are in and perform their self accordingly.

From the perspective of the gender studies sphere, Simone de Beauvoir (1973) applies Goffman's (1956) theory to how gender is performed and how gender identity is defined through such performances of the self. de Beauvoir (1973, p. 301) states that individuals are not born with a gender, but rather develop their gender through socialisation and various gendered performances of the self. It is this foundation of Goffman's (1956) theory and de Beauvoir's (1973) application of Goffman's (1956) theory that Butler (1988) builds on to construct her gender identity performance theory in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. Butler (1988, p.p. 519-520) argues that gender identity is developed and constantly changing due to the development of gender associations in society as a social construct, arguing that it is unstable and dynamic. In *Performativity, Precarity*

and *Sexual Politics* (2009), Butler further develops this argument, stating that individuals present a version of their gender identity in the ways they perform their self, aligning with Goffman's (1956) theory and assumptions of the performed self. Bringing the two theories together, Butler (1988, p. 526; 2009, p. xi) argues that gender is something that is learned through socialising gender norms, and is interpreted, rehearsed and reproduced as a performance of one's self in different gender performances. Butler's theory maintains the dramaturgical approach to gender identity performance found in Goffman's *Presentation of the Self* (1956).

3. Critique of Calliope's gender identity performance

Several scholars have debated whether Eugenides' (2013) *Middlesex* presents an intersex narrative that transcends heteronormative confines in society or if it fails to transcend past those standards. In *Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony*, Mimi Schippers (2007) explains that gender in the heteronormative sphere is grounded on binary gender associations and three components that determine one's gender performance. These components include the social location in which that individual performs their gender; the set of behaviours and characteristics associated with that gender; and when those behaviours are undertaken on a widespread scale and culturally maintained as the norm in society (Schippers, 2007, p. 86). These three components of heteronormative gender explain that on the heteronormative spectrum, gender is socially constructed and reinforced, and becomes a social regulator of the social panopticon. Furthermore, Schippers (2007, p. 86) states that once these gender identities are formed and performed, they begin to shape the way that individuals experience their body, sense of self and how they perform their gender identity. Stevi Jackson (2006, p. 114) brings this argument back to Butler's (1988) gender identity performance theory in *Gender, Sexuality and Heteronormativity*, explaining that such heteronormative control in society results in members of society "doing" or performing their gender identity within the confines of heteronormative standards. Jackson (2006, p. 116) also explains that the self is never fixed in gender and sexuality as they are continuously renegotiated and reconfirmed by the societal norms within that environment, thus agreeing with de Beauvoir (1973) and Butler's (1988; 2009) assertion that gender is unstable and dynamic. Schippers (2007, p. 87) also explains that this heteronormative regulation in the social panopticon marginalises both those who do conform and who do not conform to heteronormative standards as those who do not conform are outcast as the abject being and those who do conform do so out of fear of being the abject being. This too could align with Goffman (1956) and Butler's (1988) theories as the self presented within this heteronormative social panopticon could be presented in a way that protects the self from being the abject being within that environment.

Debora Shostak (2008) applies the foundations of Butler's (1988; 2009) arguments on gender performativity to *Middlesex* (Eugenides, 2013) within the context of this heteronormative social panopticon in *Theory Uncompromised by Practicality: Hybridity in Jeffrey Eugenides' "Middlesex"*. In this article, Shostak (2008, p. 383) first looks at Eugenides' address of the intersex narrative as a means to bring the conversation of gender performance narratives of intersex individuals to the mainstream public eye.

Shostak (2008, p. 383) explains that this is done as an attempt at activism, or to bring about social change in how such narratives are viewed in society. However, Shostak's (2008, p. 383) examination of the novel leads her to conclude that this attempt cannot be viewed as successful activism as it does not bring about social change and still presents heteronormative conformity. Secondly, Shostak (2008, p.p. 399-400) argues that Calliope performs gendered performances of the self that conform to heteronormative gender standards out of fear of becoming what Schippers (2007) describes as the outcast abject being. Shostak (2008, p. 399) suggests that while Calliope is young, his/her bodily differences and abnormal, exterior sexual organs are not noticeable in comparison to others. However, as Calliope grows older, he/she realises that his/her sex does not conform to male or female sex norms (Shostak, 2008, p. 399). For instance, Calliope in this particular time does not fit the normal sexology of males as he/she does not have a penis and scrotum, however, he/she does not fit the female biology either as he/she never grows breasts and never experiences a real period (Shostak, 2008, p.p. 399-400). As a result, Calliope becomes anxious and fearful of being the abject being in the social panopticon regulating his/her society, which leads him/her to begin performing specific, extreme gender performances to avoid marginalisation and becoming a social outcast (Shostak, 2008, p.p. 399-400). Through Shostak's (2008) qualitative examination and textual analysis of Calliope's gender identity performances in the *Middlesex* (Eugenides, 2013), she makes the final argument that despite Calliope's struggle to find a stable gender identity and his/her eventual attempt to become a masculine male in gender, all he/she would need to do is "act like a boy" to find a stable gender identity as a "stealth man" earlier and to avoid abjection (Shostak, 2008, p.p. 404-405).

Similar to Shostak (2008), Rachel Carroll (2010) also examines Calliope's transition from Callie to Cal using his/her gender identity performances. Carroll's (2010, p.p. 189-191) examination of these gender performances highlights their unstable and evolving nature as well as their ultimate conformity to the binary extremes of heteronormative gender norms. Carroll (2010, p.p. 191-192) further explains Eugenides' (2013) depiction of the intersex condition as incorrect in sex, stating that Calliope's hermaphrodite condition is depicted as a medical emergency that requires the correcting of sex and gender identity through corrective surgery and gender conformity. Carroll (2010, p.p. 191-192) argues that this too is in line with Butler's (1988; 2009) and Schippers' (2007) notions that society will always try to fix or cast out those abject beings that do not conform, which also affirms Shostak (2008, p. 383) argument that Eugenides' (2013) depiction of the intersex narrative in *Middlesex* fails to transcend heteronormative regulations.

Stephanie Hsu (2011, p.p. 87-88) branches from Shostak (2008) and Carroll's (2010) arguments in her discussion of Calliope's narration, arguing that Eugenides brings the intersex condition and narrative voice to the forefront of mainstream conversation through Calliope's refusal of corrective surgery as a hermaphrodite. Hsu (2011, p. 91) suggests that despite Calliope's performances conforming to heteronormative gender and sexology standards, bringing the depiction of Calliope's unstable gender identity as a focus of the novel and depicting the character refusing to be fixed by those who

do conform to and reinforce the heteronormative standards allows for the intersex perspective to be heard without being completely abject. As can be seen in these varying arguments, there is much debate on whether the novel transcends heteronormative confines. However, this paper brings an alternative standpoint in the discussion, looking rather at how Calliope's unstable gender identity performances and their tendency to conform to various heteronormative standards of femininity and masculinity allow for the depiction of a gender metamorphosis and the defragmenting of gender identity from the intersex perspective.

4. Calliope's gender metamorphosis and identity defragmentation

In the opening of the novel, Calliope narrates the following:

I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August 1974... But now, at the age of forty-one, I feel another birth coming on (Eugenides, 2013, p. 3).

This opening to the novel provides the reader with a timeline of Calliope's gender transformation. In discussing this gender transformation journey, this above sequence will be used, starting with Calliope's first birth as Callie and her projection of gender performance and gender identity, moving into Callie's discovery of her intersex condition and the gender identity confusion that unfolds, and ending with Calliope's final transformation to Cal as an adult. Using this structure, this paper will argue that this gender transformation is Calliope's journey through his/her unstable and fragmented self and that it is what allows for his/her gender metamorphosis and identity defragmentation into Cal.

From birth, Calliope is raised as a female and socialised into heteronormative femininity. As a result, is raised as Callie and performs gender identity as per heteronormative feminine standards until late teenage years. This is evident in both the performances that Callie puts on, and in Calliope's narration of those performances. These feminine gender identity performances start as simple performances of femininity. For instance, Eugenides (2013, p. 278) presents Calliope's description of Callie's eyes as "Cleopatra eyes". Here, Eugenides (2013, p. 278) makes a seeming comparison of Callie's eyes to those of Cleopatra, a widely known model of beauty and femininity from ancient Egypt. Drawing this comparison takes the image of Cleopatra's femininity and beauty and transfers it to Callie, emphasising Callie as feminine and beautiful.

In this same narrative instance, Calliope states that she "combed [her] long hair and sometimes stole [her] mother's mascara to do [her] eyes" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 278). Here, the femininity in Callie's performance becomes more apparent in her behaviours rather than through comparison. Callie's maintenance of long hair and use of mascara are both perceived as feminine behaviours used to uphold beauty ideals. This aligns with Goffman's (1956) presentation of the self as it allows Callie to present a certain appearance of self to the public; one masked with makeup to exude feminine


beauty. In this instance, Callie performance feminine gender identity that could be argued to be the result of socialising agents, as per Butler's (1988, p.p. 519-520) argument that family can impact how gender is performed. For example, Callie could have seen her mother using that mascara, associated femininity and beauty with that cosmetic item, and used it to mimic the femininity and beauty of her mother. This performance of femininity and beauty is carried further in Callie's behaviours as she grows older. As Callie enters early adolescence, her body begins to change, growing more hair in different areas and developing more gendered bodily traits. During these changes, Callie's performance of feminine beauty and femininity become slightly stronger and adhere more towards heteronormative norms. Take, for instance, the following passage:

From then on, Sophie Sassoon took care of my facial hair. I went in about twice a month, adding depilation to an ever-growing list of upkeep requirements. I started shaving my legs and underarms. I plucked my eyebrows. The dress code at my school forbade cosmetics. But on weekends I got to experiment, within limits. Reetika and I painted our faces in her bedroom, passing a hand mirror back and forth. I was particularly given to dramatic eyeliner. My model here was Maria Callas, or possibly Barbra Streisand in *Funny Girl* (Eugenides, 2013, p. 311).

The narrative explains that Callie visits Sophie Sassoon's salon for facial hair removal treatment twice a month, as well as shaves her own legs and underarms and plucks her eyebrows. All of these actions are behaviours used by women to maintain a feminine and beautiful appearance as per heteronormative ideals. Such upkeep, as Calliope describes it, is a "requirement" or an expectation that society has of women that Callie must maintain to fit social heteronormative gender norms. This passage also shows Callie experimenting with cosmetic makeup on a more regular basis, which is another feminine behaviour. Calliope narrates that she paints her face with makeup. This suggests more than just the mascara from earlier. Using the phrase "painted our faces" implies the use of a lot of makeup, which furthers Callie's attempt to present a feminine and beautiful self to the public eye. This emphasised use of makeup is reiterated when Callie takes a liking to "dramatic eyeliner" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 311). Describing the eyeliner usage as "dramatic" in style further implies a more extreme use of makeup, thus, a more extreme feminine presentation of the self and feminine gender identity performance than before. These performances of a feminine self are also explained to be modelled after two female celebrities that fit the mould of heteronormative femininity, namely Maria Callas and Barbra Streisand. For Callie, the imitation of these two celebrities is a way of meeting the socialised gender performances of heteronormative femininity. Additionally, Eugenides' (2013, p. 311) use of feminine female models could also be a means of showing the change in Calliope's gender identity performances from childhood to teenage years. For example, Callie no longer only mimics the feminine behaviours and appearances of her mother, but also imitates well known female celebrities who portray the feminine extremes of heteronormative societal norms. These feminine beauty upkeep routines and behaviours can be considered performances of the self that Callie does for the

benefit of society and to avoid nonconformity. As per Goffman's (1956) assertions, Callie's feminine beauty upkeep routines are the gender identity performances of the self, and these performances are tailored and targeted for public, societal view.

As Callie grows into her mid-teenage years, she notices that her body has not changed with puberty like her female classmates. Callie's classmates begin to develop larger breasts and start to experience menstruation, while Callie has not and instead realises her genitalia look different to that of other girls (Shostak, 2008, p.p. 399-400). As this lack of development persists, Callie and her mother become anxious as to why Callie's body is so different to other females her age. In order to avoid a gynaecologist appointment as per her mother's wishes, Callie begins faking her period each month and performing more feminine gender behaviours (Shostak, 2008, p.p. 399-400). This is evidenced in the following passage:

That summer – while the President's lies were also getting more elaborate – I started faking my period. With Nixonian cunning, Calliope unwrapped and flushed away a flotilla of unused Tampax. I feigned symptoms from headache to fatigue. I did cramps the way Meryl Streep did accents. There was the twinge, the dull ache, the sucker punch that made me curl up on my bed. My cycle, though imaginary, was rigorously charted on my desk calendar. I used the catacomb fish symbol  to mark the days. I scheduled my periods through December, by which time I was certain my real menarche would have finally arrived. My deception worked. It calmed my mother's anxieties and somehow even my own. I felt I'd taken charge of things. I wasn't at the mercy of nature anymore (Eugenides, 2013, p. 361).

This passage highlights the extremes to which Calliope goes to perform feminine gender identity and behaviour that conforms to heteronormative standards of female sex and gender. It also highlights the change in Calliope's behaviour from simply imitating feminine gender acts to performing more extreme and fake acts that maintain femininity and female sex in the eyes of her family and society. In this instance, the faking of menstruation is Callie's performance of female sex and gender. Calliope, as the narrator, describes this fake period as a performance, stating that she "started faking" her period and that she "feigned symptoms from headache to fatigue" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 361). The keywords 'faking' and "feigning" highlight Callie's actions as a performance. Additionally, this image of performing is furthered by Eugenides' likening of it to two specific examples of acting. Eugenides likens Callie's faking of her period to the "cunning" lies that President Nixon produces at the time, thus associating Nixon's acting and lying with Calliope's performance of menstruation. This is emphasised when Eugenides describes Callie's performance of menstruation as being done with "Nixonian cunning" (2013, p. 361). Eugenides (2013, p. 361) also compares Callie's performance of menstruation to the acting of famous actress, Meryl Streep. Calliope explains that Callie "did cramps the way Meryl Streep did accents", drawing direct comparison between Callie's fake menstruation and Meryl Streep's performance of accents. This relating of Callie's performance to Meryl Streep's acting also transfers the talent of Meryl Streep's acting to Callie's own

performance, creating the image of Callie's fake period as a convincing performance. The depth of this comparison is further emphasised with Calliope's description of the various types of cramps that she feigned as symptoms of her period, such as "the dull ache" and "the sucker punch". Eugenides (2013, p. 361) also depicts Calliope describing Callie's scheduled and monthly performed periods as being "rigorously charted" on a calendar up until December in that year. The word choice of "rigorously" implies that the action is strictly planned and implemented, creating the tone that the faking of the period as the performance of feminine identity and sex is extreme in nature.

Calliope states that the performance, "calmed my mother's anxieties and somehow even my own" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 361). Linking this back to Callie's anxieties regarding her lack of female bodily changes and her fear of being discovered as abnormal by her mother and doctor, it becomes clear that Callie goes to this extreme to avoid being perceived as Butler's (1999) abject being (Shostak, 2008, p. 400). In this instance, Callie is the performer, and the audience is her mother and family, which aligns with Butler (1988; 2009) and Goffman's (1956) assertions that individuals present a certain self to an audience depending on who the audience is and on whether it is in private or public view.

Branching from these anxieties, Callie's growth into later adolescence worsens them as she becomes more confused by her lack of female bodily changes and her sexual desires for females, specifically for the Obscure Object. This period can be called Calliope's in between stage of gender identity given his/her confusion and fast approaching gender transformation. Shostak (2008, p.p. 402-403) also discusses Calliope's gender confusion during adolescence using Calliope, the Obscure Object, Rex Reese and Jerome's sex scene as the primary passage and indicator of this gender identity confusion. This scene is presented in the following passage:

And then, because I suddenly knew that I could, I slipped into the body of Rex Reese. I entered him like a god so that it was me, and not Rex, who kissed her... By way of Rex's body I was hugging the Obscure Object, nuzzling her ear... while at the same time I was also aware of Jerome's hands ranging over my body, the one I'd left on the other cot... While on the other cot Rex was meeting with no such resistance. With consummate skill he has undone the Object's brassiere with one hand. Because he was more experienced than me I let him deal with the shirt buttons, but it was my hands that took hold of her bra and, as if snapping up a windowshade, let into the room the pale light of the Object's breasts. I saw them; I touched them; and since it wasn't me who did this but Rex Reese, I didn't have to feel guilty, didn't have to ask myself if I was having unnatural desires. How could I be when I was on the other cot fooling around with Jerome? ... and so, just to be safe, I returned my attention to him... And then: pain. Pain like a knife, pain like fire. It ripped into me. It spread up my belly all the way to my nipples. I gasped; I opened my eyes; I looked up and saw Jerome looking down at me. We gaped at each other and I knew he knew. Jerome

knew what I was, as suddenly I did, too, for the first time clearly understood that I wasn't a girl but something in between. I knew this from how natural it had felt to enter Rex Reese's body, *how right it felt...* (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374).

Shostak (2008, p. 403) argues that in this scene, Calliope discovers that he/she is neither male nor female in gender or sex, labelling this as Calliope's 'middlesex' phase of gender identity and the prelude to Calliope's gender metamorphosis. In this particular passage, Calliope's gender confusion is shown in his/her performance of two different gender identity performances: one of female femininity and one of male masculinity. In the above passage, Calliope's first gender performance is of femininity when experiencing sexual intercourse with Jerome. Calliope's initial intention of going through with sex with Jerome can be seen as a performance of the self, tailored to the audience and to its occurrence in the semi-public eye. This is because Calliope's performance of heteronormative sex as Callie is done because she knows that her actions and performance of her 'self' is in public view with Rex Reese, the Obscure Object and Jerome present. Callie allows Jerome's hands to range over her body and initially allows Jerome to penetrate into what he thinks is Callie's vagina. In allowing this to happen, Callie performs according to heteronormative norms by engaging in sex with Jerome as he is a male and that is the norm for her to adhere to. However, as Jerome penetrates her, Callie experiences "pain like a knife, pain like fire" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374). This gender performance is short-lived as the focus instead turns to Callie's gender performance as a masculine male, which occurs simultaneously.

Whilst having sex with Jerome, Callie imagines entering the body of Rex Reese as he has sexual intercourse with the Obscure Object, whom Callie has romantic and sexual feelings for. Callie describes her imaginative entrance into Rex Reese's body as a means to feel what it would be like to explore her sexual desires with the Obscure Object. Calliope states that he/she does this, "so that it was me, not Rex, who kissed her" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374). Callie further imagines that she is the one taking off the Obscure Object's bra and fondling her breasts. In these instances of Callie describing herself taking the place of Rex Reese, Eugenides (2013, p. 374) uses first-person narration and personal pronouns to describe what Callie is doing to the Obscure Object, stating that "it was me [...] who kissed her [...] it was my hand that took hold of her bra [...] I saw them; I touched them" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374). Using these personal pronouns in Calliope's narration of the experience allows Callie to not only enter Rex's body in imagination, but to also identify as a male herself and to experience sex with the Obscure Object. Thus, by going back and forth between the bodies, Callie is able to experience both gender identities. Whilst inhabiting Rex's body, Callie identifies with and experience masculine maleness. At the same time, Callie is also able to experience feminine gender identity. As such, Callie identifies with both gender identities simultaneously. By inhabiting Rex's body, Callie also "didn't have to feel guilty" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374) about her lesbian desires or sexual conduct with the Obscure Object because her imagination places her in Rex's body performing masculine male gender and heterosexual desires. As such, she does not break any heteronormative rules in her experience and does not risk becoming the

abject being. However, it is in this scene that Callie discovers she is not a girl, “but something in between” (Eugenides, 2013: 374). Calliope explains that “I knew this from how natural it had felt to enter Rex Reese’s body, *how right it felt...*” (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374). This causes further gender identity and sexual orientation confusion as it also leads to Callie’s self-discovery of what she is not, which is how she has been socialised and raised to be. It is at this point that Callie begins her gender identity metamorphosis and her journey to defragment the self that she has now discovered is fragmented and wrong.

After this encounter, Callie begins having lesbian sexual encounters with the Obscure Object in the following days. During those encounters, Callie becomes more herself in her sexual orientations, which marks the second initiating factor of her gender identity metamorphosis. After a few days of her lesbian experiences, Callie is in an accident that leads to her family and Dr Luce discovering her pseudohermaphrodite condition, which she had managed to keep secret until then. Once this is discovered, Callie’s anxieties and fears of becoming the abject being become a reality as she is put into therapy with Dr Luce. During those therapy sessions, Dr Luce attempts to determine what gender Calliope identifies with so that he can recommend corrective surgery to make Calliope the sex that matches his/her gender identity. However, as Calliope is unaware of Dr Luce’s reasoning, he/she again resorts to performing feminine gender identity to avoid further abjection as that is how Callie has maintained social and medical safety thus far. Calliope performs stereotypical feminine gender identity behaviours that she thinks Dr Luce and her family want to see. For example, Calliope writes several journal entries for Dr Luce to examine, in which she pretends to like pie recipes, to be “the all-American daughter” that her parents and society want her to be and pretends to have crushes on males instead of females (Eugenides, 2013, p. 418). All of these behaviours and mannerisms are typical feminine characteristics associated with female gender within the heteronormative sphere. It is also here that Calliope admits to writing for an audience, confessing to writing in a way that performs heteronormative feminine gender identity for Dr Luce to read in those journal entries. Therefore, Calliope’s performances not only met Butler’s (1988; 2009) gender identity performance theory, but also that of Goffman’s (1956) theory in that the self Calliope presents is one designed for and specifically enacted only to Dr Luce. However, these performances are no longer sufficient in keeping Calliope safe from medical correction, and Dr Luce suggests corrective surgery to make Calliope as female as possible to fix her hermaphrodite condition. When Calliope uncovers this in Dr Luce’s report, she runs away and allows for her gender transformation journey to unfold without holding back, beginning to perform gender and behave as a male under the name Cal.

As Cal, Calliope’s gender identity performances change over time to become more masculine, becoming more notable when Cal goes to a barber for a haircut:

Standing inside the door but looking as though he might flee back out of it was a teenage kid, tall, stringy, and an odd mix if ever Ed saw one. His hair was a hippie’s and came down past his shoulders. But he was wearing a

dark suit. The jacket was baggy and the trousers were too short, riding high above his chunky tan, square-toed shoes. Even from across the shop Ed detected a musty, thrift-store smell. Yet, the kid's suitcase was big and gray, a businessman's... My Skeleton was a male's, with its higher centre of gravity. It promoted a tidy, forward thrust. It was my knees that gave me trouble. I had a tendency to walk knock-kneed, which made my hips sway and my back end twitch. I tried to keep my pelvis steady now. To walk like a boy you let your shoulders sway, not your hips. And you kept your feet farther apart (Eugenides, 2013, p. 441).

In this passage, Calliope's gender identity performances drastically change as a result of Calliope's gender confusion, which is evident in how Calliope's gender performances become more masculine in attire and mannerisms. Looking at Calliope's clothing in this passage, Cal is depicted as wearing a baggy jacket, trousers, men's shoes and using a masculine, grey suitcase. This description creates the image of Calliope appearing more masculine compared to how Callie dressed. The masculine imagery is emphasised by the description of the shoes being "chunky tan, square-toed shoes" and the suitcase being "a businessman's" suitcase (Eugenides, 2013, p. 441). Such descriptions highlight a male masculine look, associating masculinity with Cal's appearance. The performance of masculinity in this passage is furthered by the way Eugenides describes Cal's change in walking style. Cal is described as having a more male skeleton that promotes a "tidy, forward thrust" in his walk (Eugenides, 2013, p. 441). Calliope also explains that Cal tries to keep his pelvis steady and let his shoulders sway as he walks, presenting a more masculine walking style that is intentionally changed from Callie's walking style. This intentional change in walking style is evidenced by Calliope's stating "[t]o walk like a boy you let your shoulders sway, not your hips. And you kept your feet farther apart" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 441). In explaining these changes that Cal makes to his walk, Eugenides shows the reader (as the audience of this particular performance) major gender performance changes in Cal that fit into male masculine behaviour and gender identity. As such, this passage shows how Cal's gender identity performances change from feminine gender performances to masculine performances. It is also evident in the passage that all of these performances of masculinity are based on what Calliope has previously observed in heteronormative society, especially the supposed masculine walking style, as this is a behaviour that can and must be learned through observation and imitation.

Furthermore, Cal's going to the barber instead of a salon like in the past as Callie is also a change to masculine gender performance. A barber shop is a hair salon specifically for males, and Cal's attendance to one promotes the image of him as a masculine male. It is also important to note here that these acts of masculine walking behaviours and getting a male-styled hair cut are all done in public view and for the purpose of showing society a masculine gender identity. As such, Calliope's masculine behaviours are performances of the self that meet Goffman's (1959) assertions of the self being presented for a specific audience depending on who that audience is and whether the performance is in the public eye. Additionally, Cal's

decision to cut his hair short to look more male is another form of performing masculine gender identity in terms of appearance, much like Callie's gender performances of combing her long hair and using makeup to maintain a feminine appearance to present a certain self to society that the society she was performing to would want. While these are not the final changes to Cal's gender identity performances, the drastic changes depicted show the gender transformation undergone and how close Cal is to emerging from his gender metamorphosis as a masculine man with a defragmented sense of self.

As Cal develops and explores this change in gender identity, he solidifies his gender identification as male in later adulthood, performing more extreme masculine gender performances to conform to masculine heteronormative norms. This move to extreme masculine gender performance is most notable in Calliope's narration of Cal's current adult life as a male after meeting Julia Kikuchi - his love interest - for the first time. These performances are evident in the following passage:

Unbuttoning my suit jacket, I took a cigar from the inner pocket of my coat. From a still smaller pocket I took out my cigar cutter and matches. Though it wasn't after dinner, I lit the cigar - a Davidoff Grand Cru No. 3 - and stood smoking, trying to calm myself. The cigars, the double-breasted suits - they're a little too much. I'm well aware of that. But I need them. They make me feel better. After what I've been through, some overcompensation is to be expected. In my bespoke suit, my checked shirt, I smoked my medium-fat cigar until the fire in my blood subsided. Something you should understand: I'm not androgynous in the least... I operate in society as a man. I use the men's room. Never the urinals, always the stalls. In the men's locker room at my gym I even shower, albeit discreetly. I possess all the secondary sex characteristics of a normal man except one: my inability to synthesize dihydrotestosterone has made me immune to baldness. I've lived more than half my life as a male, and by now everything comes naturally (Eugenides, 2013, p. 41).

In this passage, Cal is depicted as wearing masculine male clothing: a "suit jacket" and also often wearing "double-breasted suits" (Eugenides, 2013, p. 41). Furthermore, Cal is also depicted as having "medium-fat" branded cigars and lighting them with a cigar cutter and matches. These are typical masculine behaviours often seen in films performed by extremely masculine males. These together act as Cal's way of performing a more masculine gender identity, both internally and externally. These two behaviours in the passage also highlight the change in gender performance Cal has made from wearing a normal suit, men's shoes and having a masculine walk and hair style, to being more masculine in appearance as an adult and engaging in more masculine habits (such as his smoking of cigars). Cal also explicitly mentions other masculine gender performances, stating that he operates in society as a male, using men's bathrooms and men's locker rooms. Such performances show the male masculine gender identity that Cal goes great lengths to emphasise and to conform to extreme heteronormativity. In terms of the extremity of these masculine gender

identity performances and presentations of a more masculine self, Cal admits that all of the masculine mannerisms, habits and attire that he exhibits are “a little too much” (Eugenides, 2013, p. 41). He states, however, that this is an expected overcompensation. This implies that it is possibly a way to drown the feminine gender identity performances he was forced to present as his self during childhood and adolescence as Callie. Eugenides’ phrasing in this instance, such as stating that it is “too much” and describing such performances as a form of “overcompensation” also implies that these performances are done to the extreme to exude masculinity and present a certain self to the public that society would deem up to standard for heteronormative masculinity. This implied extremity through specific word choice is something that Eugenides (2013) has used to emphasise the extremes of Calliope’s gender performances throughout the passages analysed. The recurring use of words that imply extremities brings the passages together to unite them in the theme of gender identity performances and their tendency to go to the heteronormative extreme for the purpose of performing a certain self to society. Additionally, Cal also states, “I’m not androgynous” (Eugenides, 2013, p. 41), which further cements his gender identity as not fluid between feminine and masculine, but rather as one or the other – in this case, masculine. Thus, between this and Cal’s previous gender performances as Callie, there is drastic change in the gender identity performed as the self, which shows how Calliope’s gender performances have moved from the heteronormative extremes of femininity to the typical heteronormative extremes of masculinity.

Cal also states that he has lived more than half his life as a male in society, to the point where “everything comes naturally” (Eugenides, 2013, p. 41). Examining this in comparison to Callie’s experience in imaginatively inhabiting Rex’s body, parallels can be drawn. For example, Callie explains that it felt natural and right to be in Rex’s male body (Eugenides, 2013, p. 374). This admittance that being male and masculine feels natural to Callie is then mirrored in the above passage for Cal. Thus, this final iteration of that masculine gender being natural solidifies Cal’s gender identity as solid instead of as unstable as in his previous experiences through life. This statement also marks the end of Cal’s metamorphosis and the birth of Cal as the final phase of Calliope’s gender and identity. Through the passages analysed from Calliope’s birth as Callie to the birth of Cal in adulthood, a journey of growth is evident. First is the journey of Calliope’s unstable gender. Through Calliope’s experiences as Callie and the extreme behaviours to conform to female, feminine heteronormative standards, Calliope is able to determine that he/she needed to change their gender identity as that performed feminine identity was fragmented and not natural to him/her. Thereafter, Cal begins performing masculine gender performances, which start to feel more natural and allow Cal to stabilise his identity as a masculine male. As such, it was the unstable nature of Calliope’s gender identity performances that allowed for Calliope to realise what felt natural and for Cal to emerge. Secondly, it is this gender metamorphosis into Cal that led to Calliope’s realisation that their identity was fragmented by their gender confusion and that initiated Calliope’s defragmentation of that identity so that Cal could surface.

5. Conclusions

Through analysing selected instances of Calliope's gender identity performances using Goffman's presentation of the self and Butler's gender identity performance theory, it is evident that Calliope's gender performances are unstable and that his/her gender identity seems fragmented for most of the novel. During childhood and early to mid-adolescence, Calliope lives as Callie and performs her gender identity as feminine. In doing so, Callie performs gender in ways that conform to heteronormative standards of femininity, feminine beauty, female sexology and female heteronormative sexuality. At times, these performances go to the extreme to conform so as not to be the abject being, such as with Callie's faking of her period and her intentional faking of heterosexuality with Jerome. However, during later adolescence and adulthood, Calliope realises that this performed gender identity is not one that he/she identifies with and is instead, fragmented. Is it then that Calliope performs masculine gender identity as Cal, performing in ways that adhere to masculinity, masculine appearance, male sexology and male heterosexuality. In doing so, Cal embraces an unstable gender identity performance in order to evolve into the male identity he identifies with, thus undergoing a complete gender metamorphosis and defragmenting his own gender identity. As such, while the novel is critiqued for failing to transcend heteronormative norms from the intersex perspective, the novel instead depicts an intersex narrative that shows how an unstable gender identity can be beneficial in finding one's identity and gender.

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