

Sex, Gender, Sexuality: Subalternity in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: June 07, 2020

Accepted: August 26, 2020

Published: September 30, 2020

Volume: 9 Issue: 5

Advance access: September 2020

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

In contrast with what is widely emphasized and academically discussed, subalternity emerges in a broad spectrum. The current research discusses sex, gender and sexuality as fertile grounds of subalternity in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*. Although the Classical Marxist tradition submits "class" as the only narrative of oppression and inequality, Gramsci's Marxism can account for a wider range of narratives, namely, sex, age, race, gender and sexual orientation, and, subsequently, replaces "the proletariat" with "the subalterns." Gramsci divided superstructure in two parts (civil society and political society) and traced the footsteps of oppression and subordination through everyday lives by concepts such as "hegemony," "civil society," and "common sense." As well as Gramsci, Judith Butler draws attention to the legislation of norms in the social domain. Heterosexuality, sexual dimorphism and masculine/feminine dichotomy are norms which are legislated and hegemonic through the institutions of civil society and shape people's common sense about sex, gender and sexuality. "Normalization" and "recognition," to employ Butler's words, occur based on the norms and turn the outsiders into the subalterns. In this regard, this study discusses intersex Cal/lie and homosexual Sourmelina as subalterns challenging the normative sex, gender and sexuality. The Stephanides family, New York Public Library, Orthodox religion, Sophie Sassoon's beauty parlor and Ed's barbershop are all civil society institutions that play a significant role in dissemination of heteronormativity, sexual dimorphism and masculine/feminine dichotomy and, thereby, subalternity of Cal/lie and Sourmalina.

Key words: Subalternity, Sex, Gender, Sexuality, Institutions, *Middlesex*, Intersex

INTRODUCTION

There was a time when Marxism considered subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie as the only kind of subordination within a capitalist society, which was only economic-based. Thus, in the opinion of many Marxist thinkers and critics, the only narrative of inequality was that of class. This assumption was derived from the great deal of emphasis that Karl Marx put on base and economic power. However, it is not all Marxism is concerned with, as long as it has Antonio Gramsci as a contributor. Showing a break with the classical Marxist tradition, Gramsci looked for the roots of oppression in the superstructure than the economic base. Scrutinizing the superstructure, he submitted a much more complicated and detailed model introducing the challenging terms, namely, "hegemony," and "common sense" and redefining "civil society." Recently, owed to the concepts that Gramsci explained in his *Prison Notebooks*, Marxism has found its way through different dimensions of social life and can account for a wider range of narratives of inequality. Thanks to the activities of the Subaltern Studies Group, nowadays, the term "subalternity" has gotten a far vaster scope to be solely expressed in class (Crehan). By relying on Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, they

proved that our understanding of what Gramsci discussed as "subalterns" needed enrichment and expansion and this was the reason he preferred the term "subalterns" over "proletariat" (Crehan). "As a totality, the condition of subalternity is broadly inclusive, encompassing all those who are oppressed rather than oppressing, ruled rather than ruling" (Crehan 15). Regarding this, age, sex, gender, race, sexual orientation and many other categories could act as fertile grounds of oppression and inequality in the social realm. Thus, as Dominic Strinati maintains in her book *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (2004), hegemony accounts for the supremacy of a ruling group which is not exclusively the bourgeoisie and subordination of a group which is not merely the working class. Civil society also becomes where issues more than class are in circulation.

Gramsci divided superstructure in two parts (civil society and political or state society) and argued that legislation did not always occur tangibly in the form of law within the political realm. He emphasized that by means of hegemony and within the realm of civil society another form of legislation was operating by creating norms in more private levels of life. Similar to Gramsci, Butler, taking into account Mary

Poovey's notion, maintains that there are two levels in which gender regulation is accomplished: political and social domain. She believes that gender regulation is not merely done by means of law through legal and juridical institutions and it is regulated through norms in the social realm, too. As she further elucidates, "a norm is not the same as a rule, and it is not the same as a law. A norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of *normalization* ... Norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible ..." (Butler 41). So, whatever the norms have normalized and naturalized, or, in other words, whatever finds its way through people's "common sense"- to use Gramsci's term- they are able to understand, conceive as real and deserving to become a part of social life.

Intelligibility and recognizability are concessions that are given to those inside. As Butler expresses, taking into account Hegelian tradition, we all have a desire for recognition. We want to be socially recognized and intelligible to build our "self" in the society. But recognition becomes possible only on the basis of prevailing social norms. It means that we will be recognized and able to be socially viable beings as long as our self is constructed based on the paradigms that the norms have provided us with. As she explains further, according to Spinoza, all of the human beings tend to persist on their being. This is the reason we desire recognition. We can persist on our being to the extent that we offer and receive recognition, but when there are no norms in the common sense of the society which help us being recognized, we remain unrecognizable and out of the grid of possible beings. In this way those who stand in the position of nonconformity toward hegemonic dimorphism and hegemonic heterosexuality and, in general, those challenging the hegemonic dichotomies of masculine/feminine and male/female are conceived abject, excluded and unintelligible. Therefore, they are exposed to violence "to restore order, to renew the social world on the basis of intelligible gender and sex, and to refuse the challenge to rethink the world as something other than natural or necessary" (Butler 34). This is exactly the kind of violence that occurs as a consequence of the prevailing hegemony at the level of social, everyday life, the one that Pierre Bourdieu, the French psychologist has called "Symbolic violence". Violence is not always coercion applied by the institutions of political society such as the police. "It takes the form of taste judgments, where outsiders are marginalized and shamed; of physical behaviour and 'ways of living' where some feel confident and others feel awkward ..." (Jones 52). Thus, as Butler declares, discrimination, loss of employment, sexual harassment, the coercive sex reassignment and even those odd gazes are all manifestations of violence against gender and sexual minorities. To be called unreal and to be estranged are forms of being oppressed which lead to the consequences where the oppressed are deprived of living, are not considered human and their lives will not be livable.

This research aims to delineate a new picture of subalternity, which is in terms of sex, gender and sexual orientation, in *Middlesex*- the 2002 novel by Jeffrey Eugenides.

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that features an intersex protagonist, Cal/lie, there are glimpses of other non-normative characters, such as lesbian Sourmelina. This paper discusses how the civil society institutions - namely, the Stephanides family, New York Public Library, Orthodox religion, Sophie Sassoon's beauty parlor and Ed's barbershop- legislate sex, gender and sexuality norms to authenticate and disseminate sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality and masculine/feminine dichotomy in the people's common sense and, finally, turn Cal/lie and Sourmelina into subalterns. As the protagonist of the story, the main focus and concernment of this paper is subalternity of Cal/lie. He/ She undergoes abundant tribulations for standing in the position of non-confirmity towards the norms, due to his/her ambiguous body. To this end, Gramsci's account of subordination and Butler's explanation of "normalization" of the normative and "estrangement" of the non-normative are put together.

DISCUSSION

Legislation, Civil Society Institutions and Subalternity

These institutions play an essential role in legislating and disseminating the following norms: sex, naturally, can only come in either male or female types; gender, following a mimetic or causal relationship (in Butler's words) with sex, can be exclusively masculine or feminine; and heterosexuality is the only normal embodiment of sexual orientation. Thus, religion, libraries, theatres, schools, beauty salons and barbershops, Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinics, the publishing industry, family and culture can be institutions through which the dichotomy of masculine/feminine, heterosexuality and dimorphism are supported and become hegemonic. Defining and diffusing the above-mentioned norms, these institutions finally have a considerable impact on the people's common sense and those minorities standing outside the scope of this grid are considered and treated as subalterns.

Family

In their process of "gender socialization"— "the process by which individuals are taught and learn the values and norms associated with women's and men's roles in society" (Corrado 356) based on the prevailing concept of gender— individuals are to a great extent influenced by institutions of civil society so that these institutions provide them with an image of what a woman or man is to constantly adjust themselves to and fulfill womanly or manly characteristics with respect to their sex. Cal/lie's process of gender socialization is highly affected with the role of his/her family as an institution supporting the hegemonic assumptions.

As an instance of the genre of family saga, *Middlesex* portrays the life of Stephanides family through three generations. While relating his/her life-story, Cal/lie "rewind[s] the film" (Eugenides 42) many times to flash back to the past times, to include the times in 1920s, when his grandparents were residents of rural Greece, the time when his/her parents began to practice love by clarinet serenades and ended up

giving birth to two babies, and the time when he/she used to be raised as a girl. He/ She embodies the life of his/her grandparents and parents in the account he/she gives of his/her own life because at the age of forty one, after experiencing a multitude of ups and downs in his/her life, he/she has come to understand the puzzle of his/her life and existence could not be finished without the constituent parts that they offer. The extended Stephanides family, for a large part, is the community within which Cal/lie's gender identity is formed. As Cal/lie reveals his/her life to the readers, before fleeing to San Francisco, and experiencing a relative autonomy, he/she is mostly surrounded and supervised by his/her parents and grandparents and is occasionally in contact with his/her friends and schoolmates. So, it seems that his/her family are the most frequent human agencies by whom Cal/lie's common sense and identity are formed.

Before Cal/lie comes to the world, it has been deployed by gender troops guarding gender norms so strictly and ready to ripple them forth to the next generations. Stephanides family is extremely sex-segregated and adhering to the dichotomy of masculine/feminine. Back in 1920s, when Lefty and Desdemona were living in Bithynios, "in many small villages of Asia Minor ... men and women had clearly defined gendered role, men operating in the public sphere and women in charge in the domestic, private sphere" (Vliet 120). While Desdemona spent all the day cooking and taking care of the silkworm cocoonery in the yard, Lefty went down to Bursa, among the throngs of people, where he sold merchants the silk that Desdemona had produced. Even when Smyrna was burning in the flames of fire, Desdemona was sitting with her suitcase enjoying her feminine immobility while Lefty, with a masculine velocity, was in search for a last-minute resort that would give them the chance to flee from Greece and head for America. But this passivity was not exclusive to her daily tasks; even while having sex, Desdemona submitted her voluptuous body to Lefty contritely since she has learned from her mother that "sex was not desired by 'pure' women" (Vliet 131).

During all those years of their settlement in Michigan, though their tasks underwent a slight transformation, Lefty, working primarily in Ford Factory and later as the bartender of Zebra Room, remained the "male head of household, authoritarian, and breadwinner, and Desdemona as the caregiver, child-bearer, and mother" (Vliet 132). In Jimmy Zizmo's house, where both couples lived alongside, anything was gender defined: "The house was sex-segregated like the houses in the *patridha*, the old country, men in the *sala*, women in the kitchen. Two spheres with separate concerns, duties, even -the evolutionary biologists might say- thought patterns" (Eugenides 166). While Jimmy and Lefty spent much time working outside, and got involved in the hazardous job of liquor smuggling, Sormelina and Desdemona stayed home performing domestic duties in a conservative and comfortable atmosphere -however, in case of Sormelina it was the way her husband had devised the plans and had casted her in the role of a housewife.

The same goes with the next generation of Stephanides family. Milton leaves the home to join the United States Navy

but Tessie, living in her feminine world, engages in activities such as painting her nails. And to take into account their situation after their marriage, Tessie is an exemplar of the housewives totally devoted to their children and surrendered to the will of their husbands and; she is a representation of Bourgeois values, as Simon de Beauvoir (1908-1986) states, such as fidelity, patience and love of family (534). While the hegemonic concept of feminity is reified in the subordinate character of Tessie, Milton stands in the position of a "real man" representing the qualities of hegemonic masculinity such as being "heterosexual, aggressive, and competitive," (Lynch 412) being financially successful- possessing nearly 60 places of Hercules Hot Dogs- and having control over the family affairs. And when they decide to have a baby girl (Calliope) they dream of her, even before she is born, on the basis of gender norms: "my mother pictured a daughter as an counterinsurgent: a fellow lover of lapdogs, a seconder of proposals to attend the Ice Capades ... my father had been seeing visions of an irresistibly sweet, dark-eyed little girl" (Eugenides 19-20).

"Infancy constitutes a necessary dependency, one that we never fully leave behind (Butler 24). Quite unknowing and dependent, Cal/lie's body, prior to his/her process of "individuation" (Butler 23), was given over to Stephanides family on January of 1960. In the hospital, Dr. Philobosian spreaded the legs of the baby and announced she was a girl to signal the beginning of Cal/lie's gender identity formation as feminine based on the mimetic relationship between sex and gender. Now, the hegemonic feminine norms which have been awaiting Callie since long ago so eagerly, through Milton and Tessie's daydreams, get the chance to find the missing agencies for their function to exude their potential force. So, Tessie began to direct her newborn baby in the female world by wrapping her in a pink blanket and, soon, when the toddler began walking, "starved for a daughter, Tessie went a little overboard in dressing me. Pink skirts, lace ruffles, Yuletide bows in my hair" (Eugenides 394). As time passed, the parents proceeded with establishing the female gender identity of their daughter based on the common standards, giving her dolls to play with and keeping her under close supervision, despite their permitting Chapter Eleven to enjoy more freedom and practice more adventurous tasks, e.g. trying new things in a laboratory.

By the time that Cal/lie reached puberty, he/she had entirely inherited her parents' common sense, and more particularly, their sense of gender, and her identity had been thoroughly molded by gender norms. As both legislators and agencies of norms, Tessie and Milton, for a large part though not the only part, had done Callie's gender identity and undone her personhood, or the essence of her "self". The gender norms that had once been merely scripts for rehearsing are now so much internalized in Callie that they have eradicated her "self" (qtd. in Vliet 134).

So, Cal/lie, having embraced wholeheartedly the ambitions, values, idealizations and the consciousness that he/she had been supposed to attain, begins to evaluate his/her body according to female idealizations, the secondary female characteristics which his/her classmates have turned

out to obtain successfully, but haven't shown even a slightest manifestation on his/her body yet. So, he/she puts Jenny Simonson's fantastic female body on the pedestal, while he/she looks down on his/her undeveloped body: "lowering my book, I looked down at my body. There it was as usual: the flat chest, the nothing hips, the forked, mosquito-bitten legs" (Eugenides 496). Cal/lie has begun to perceive the society's notion of a woman and compares himself/herself to that image continuously (Vliet 133) through a mode of comparison which is, surely, not innate but a result of socially constructed norms. Girls are transforming into women and Cal/lie feels being left behind every day (Eugenides 500). From other side, Tessie ridicules Cal/lie's undeveloped breasts and it becomes quite unbearable to him/her:

"Don't laugh!"

"I'm sorry, honey. But it's just, you've got nothing to ... to ..."

"Mom!"

"... To hold it up."

A tantrum-edged scream. Twelve-year-old feet running up the stairs, while Tessie called out, "Don't be so dramatic, Callie. We'll get you a bra if you want" (Eugenides 505).

Cal/lie goes checks his/her breasts in front of the mirror. The reflection that he/she sees acknowledges his/her mother's words and he/she bursts into tears.

From then on, sexual maturity became Cal/lie's greatest concernment and he/she started to show an overwhelming obsession and effort to defend his/her gender identity as a girl. He/She could not do anything with his/her thin legs, undeveloped breasts and his/her "nothing hips" but he/she could retaliate all that with his/her excessively long hair to still lay claim to femininities: "unlike the rest of me, which seemed bent on doing whatever it wanted, my hair remained under my control ... I refused to let anyone cut it" (Eugenides 534). And when a thin mustache began to create a dark shadow above his/her lips, despite a sense of confusion, he/she felt specifically womanly- like his/her mother, Aunt Zo and Sourmelina- to go to Sophie Sassoon's shop in companionship of his/her mother to have those ever-growing enemies removed. And about that growing sense of confusion and doubt within her (as a result of her recent changes e.g. a sudden sharp increase of his/her height and the emergence of that mustache): not only didn't it stop him/her behaving and acting like a girl, but also it propelled him/her in a more determined position to fight for what he/she was socially expected to be. In addition to shaving his/her legs and underarms, plucking his/her eyebrows, wearing makeup and thrusting tissues in his/her bra (Eugenides), Cal/lie having been waiting for his/her period to come, went to church to pray to "receive the womanly stigmata" (Eugenides 621). But it didn't come in the due time to secure his/her position in the feminine category so, he/she faked that womanly feature by pretending to have been gone through a menstrual cycle to deceive his/her parents and avoid visiting a ladies' doctor (Eugenides).

Religion

Religion is undoubtedly one of the agents for diffusing norms of sex and gender. As one reads the novel, they come

to discern that despite Eugenides' bringing into question the efficiency of the church's doctrines (their lack of compatibility with human's real, everyday life) by presenting characters breaking the boundaries such as lesbian Lina -who goes to the church to ask God forgiveness for her sexual relationship with the same-sex partners but finds the church only a place where she can get acquainted with more girls like herself (Eugenides 156)- and his poking fun at Christian rituals and religious figures like Father Antonio, religion is not that easily defeated and this remarkable and irresistible power is evident in the role it has on the gender identity of the characters and its symbolic representation as an immortal existence which both precedes and exceeds the life of individual human beings; the church had been there before Cal/lie was born ready to shape his/her identity: "in 1959, Assumption Greek Orthodox Church was located on Charlevoix. It was there that I would be baptized less than a year later and would be brought up in the Orthodox faith" (Eugenides 29), furthermore, it witnessed the funeral of characters such as Lefty and Milton, who had tried all their lives to push against the shaping power of the church, held in the Orthodox tradition.

Although Desdemona and Tessie, falling into the category of religious women representing female stereotypes, are the most frequent churchgoers, no one, regardless of their gender and the level of their attendance at religious rituals, can escape thoroughly the impact of religion's ideology on their common sense when it comes to its prescriptions on gender and sexuality. As an example, Milton is an anti-religious character who dismisses the traditions held by the church as "a bunch of hocus-pocus" when Desdemona asks him to baptize Callie (Eugenides 385), but, in the end, what Dr. Luce writes about the way Cal/lie has been raised in his report is discontinuous to Milton's efforts: "the subject has been raised in the Greek Orthodox tradition, with its strongly sex-defined roles" (Eugenides 764). What the church anticipates the men and women to be and act like is precisely embodied in the character of Michel Antonio and his wife, Zoë, who are a clear manifestation of the binary of masculine/feminine; Father Antonio is the breadwinner of the family and Zoë is a housewife, who spends all the day doing domestic chores, and a goddess of fertility who have met female requirements giving birth to four babies.

Also by normalizing and popularizing heterosexuality as the only acceptable practice of sexual desire, religion creates a sense of homophobia inside characters, such as Sourmelina and little Cal/lie, and, thereby, an overwhelming sense of guilt for acting against heteronormativity. For sure what had happened to Sourmelina many years ago, when she used to live in Bithynios, that sense of guilt stemming from her failure to please God due to practicing homosexuality was what tangled Cal/lie later, at the age of seven. When Cal/lie was a seven-year-old girl and got involved partially in a sexual experience with her friend, Clementine Stark, it was the first time he/she was plagued by that irritating feeling and, as a consequence, he/she thought he/she was to blame for Lefty's heart attack, while watching them experiencing that forbidden kind of pleasure in the pool, and went praying for forgiveness swearing never to do the same again

when Lefty was at the hospital: "while in the other[room] a seven-year-old girl is also praying, praying for forgiveness, because it was clear to me that I was responsible. It was what I did ... what Lefty saw ..." (Eugenides 467). The Christians, as Althusser argues, "are told that God exists, that He created them, that they are responsible to Him, and how to behave in order to please Him" (Ferretter 89). Otherwise, they will be punished by internal tumult, and in this case, what is best for the wrongdoer is turning back to the Creator for atonement.

Libraries

"The production of identities is at least partly achieved through the circulation of images and texts that promote or reject particular subject positions" (Jones 69), in this regard, libraries are among the institutions which shore up the hegemonic norms during an epoch, and in this respect, New York Public Library is not exempt from idealizing dimorphism. When Cal/lie is in New York Public Library, he/she feels an impulse to check the meaning of some terms which Dr. Luce used for explaining his/her situation to his colleagues while examining his/her body in the clinic. The first word that resonates in his/her mind is "hypospadias" and he/she refers to Webster's dictionary to find the response to the question. He/She flips some pages and finds it:

hypospadias New Latin, from Greek, man with hypospadias fr. hypo + prob fromspadon, eunuch, fr. span, to tear, pluck, pull, draw.—An abnormality of the penis in which the urethra opens on its under surface. See synonyms at eunuch. (qtd. in Eugenides 753)

He/She does what the dictionary orders and here it is:

eunuch —1. A castrated man; especially, one of those who were employed as harem attendants or functionaries in certain Oriental courts. 2. A man whose testes have not developed. See synonyms at hermaphrodite. (qtd. in Eugenides 754)

Again he/she follows the direction and finds the definition:

hermaphrodite —1. One having the sex organs and many of the secondary sex characteristics of both male and female. 2. Anything comprised of a combination of diverse or contradictory elements. See synonyms at monster. (qtd. in Eugenides 754)

This is where Cal/lie's heart is torn into pieces. "Monster" is the way someone with ambiguous genitalia is described. "Monster" is Cal/lie, whose hybrid body is a combination of opposite features of both male and female standing outside the hegemonic definition of sex. And worse than all, Cal/lie is not the only person to whom the book has conveyed that kind of knowledge about the intersex: "There it was, monster, in black and white, in a battered dictionary in a great city library. A vulnerable, old book, the shape and size of a headstone, with yellowing pages that bore marks of the multitudes who had consulted them before me" (Eugenides 755). As an institution, the library has been forming the consciousness (and undoubtedly the unconscious), or in other words directing the common sense, of the people in a way that they assume hermaphrodites as monsters. When Cal/lie sees the marks of thumbing through the pages of the book she immediately comes to learn the fact that the infor-

mation which the dictionary has been giving its readers has incorporated into their sense of gender to form a common standard against the intersex and now, affected by authenticity of the dictionary, it was the time for Cal/lie to internalize that relentless knowledge.

Beauty Parlors and Barbershops

Besides being physical, bodies are culturally constructed phenomena; there are culturally defined norms which create an image of a male or female body that operates as the touchstone for evaluation of bodies in terms of the degree of their resemblance to the category which they are expected to represent. This image is partially generated through "body and beauty ideals" (Fitts 82) which, by ascribing some particular characteristics to the category of the feminine and others to the category of the masculine, bend individuals in line with gender norms to be rewarded with heterosexuality. As an example, one of the social and cultural codes through which body and beauty standards appraise individuals and differentiate men from women is presence or absence of body hair and the length of head hair. Whereas, in most cultures, men are expected to have body hair and short head hair, women are supposed to remove their body hair to be smooth and let their head hair grow long. To that end, beauty salons and barbershops modify the bodies in order to better fit in the gender categories and aid individuals in ascending to a higher level of probability of getting a chance for a heterosexual relationship.

In both Sophie Sassoon's beauty parlor and Ed's barber-shop feminine and masculine standards of beauty, respectively, are at work for the sake of and in line with normative heterosexuality. In Sophie Sassoon's shop (which Cal/lie and his/her mother as well as other women go for having their unwanted hair waxed), Helga tries to make women smooth removing the hair in unwanted places and the women suffer the pain hair removal contently for the sake of men, as Helga reminds them (Eugenides). Also, while Sophie Sassoon spends much time on dyeing and conditioning women's head hair, Ed tells Cal/lie, "women don't want a guy looks like a girl" (Eugenides 773) and appreciates Cal/lie's decision for getting a haircut because according to beauty standards, men should wear short hair to be found attractive by women.

Subalternity of Cal/lie as an Intersex

Imagine a society in which the hegemonic concepts of sex, gender and sexuality lend credence to some particular sets of beliefs, idealizations and values as norms and promulgate a certain kind of knowledge to make for the people's common sense through different institutions, then, what definitely follows is social binding and, inevitably, exclusion. As Butler explains, taking into consideration Jürgen Habermas' declarations, in a society, at large, what makes communication possible for the social speakers and actors is a common understanding established by means of norms that lend individuals support in the process of recognition when encountering each other. On this basis there will be a social order which binds individuals together and excludes anyone standing in

the position of nonconformity toward the norms, where they are rendered easily as “others” and “outsiders” for they simply do not happen to be compatible with what the majority of the people have agreed upon as acceptable and they don’t match the existing order ruling over the society. Exclusion, though it may seem a slight punishment on the surface, lies at the root of all acts of oppression and violence against the intersex individuals; it deprives them of a happy social life by invalidating their existence as unintelligible entities not deserving of recognition and social communications, demolishes their self-esteem making them feel ugly and disqualified, disdains them as abject and lower-than-human or not human at all, is detrimental to their mental health and leaves behind truly violent and subversive repercussions on their lives.

The society in which Cal/lie lives does not have room for him/her as an intersex and, instead, pushes him/her aside to live in the margins for “it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings” (Butler *Undoing Gender* 2) and Cal/lie’s in-between body does not offer any recognition to make him/her an intelligible being capable of living in the social realm as a normal individual, without having to undergo any trouble. Quite aware of this devastating fact, Cal/lie becomes “an expert in the underground life” (Eugenides 560) as he/she says, getting used to furtive and solitary activities, and feels occasionally disposed to isolate him/herself in the places such as basement bathroom of their school since he/she is safe there from the bits of conversation exchanging between Milton and Tessie about his/her unusual tallness and not menstruating, and also among his/her long hair which serves more of a wall distancing him/her from the society because he/she is safe and secure there: “I was in there all right. Where else could I go?” (Eugenides 537). Of course, it must be mentioned that, as Eugenides has stated in an interview, Cal/lie is not a dissociable and isolated character, yet there are moments when he/she feels the incongruity between the society and him/herself and, henceforth, finds isolation more comfortable and pleasant.

There were other virtues to Cal/lie’s long hair; the most beneficent function it performed was to serve as a hindrance hiding Cal/lie’s face and his/her overall anomalous being: “But there were virtues to my hair. It covered tinsel teeth. It covered satirical. It hid blemishes and, best of all, it hid me” (Eugenides 536). But this low level of self-confidence is not an innate feature of him/her, for sure. If you go back in time, when Cal/lie used to live as a girl so happily, before his/her conception of his/her beauty was challenged by his/her physique, what he/she used to feel about him/herself is in sharp contrast with the conception he/she gained during puberty:

For hours at a time I would admire my looks myself, turning this way and that before the mirror, or assuming a relaxed pose to see what I looked like in real life. By holding a hand mirror I could see my profile, still harmonious at that time. I combed my long hair and sometimes stole my mother’s mascara to do my eyes. But increasingly my narcissistic pleasure was tempered by the unlovely condition of the pool into which I gazed (Eugenides 488-489).

So, what did happen to the Cal/lie whose beauty equaled that of Narcissus? Or, better to say, what did happen to all that self-confidence? This is the compensation that the society seeks for standing outside male/female dichotomy and an example of punishing the outsiders. The intersex are not regarded beautiful because they exhibit a combination of male and female characteristics which does not have anything to do with the idealizations within the society. Accordingly, Cal/lie, who used to have a craving for the mirrors for reflexing his/her unmatched beauty, starts to loathe them: “Above each sink hung an oval mirror. I wanted nothing to do with any of them. (‘The hatred of the mirrors that begins in middle age’ started early for me.)” (Eugenides 575). Like the middle aged persons who hate the mirrors for reminding them of old age symptoms on their faces, Cal/lie detests the mirrors for they yell out a harsh fact: your appearance is too masculine to be something of female beauty. Cal/lie’s self-belief is especially diminished when he/she is at school among the beautiful girls with womanly bodies, which he/she refers to as Charm Bracelets, for he/she constantly compares his/her looks to theirs and finds him/herself lacking the same idealized features: “They wear the same uniform I do, but somehow it looks different on them, neater, more stylish” (Eugenides 513). In addition, the Charm Bracelets seemed to be equipped with reproduction potency, which had nothing to do with Cal/lie: “It was as if they had scent glands or marsupial pouches, adaptations for fecundity, for procreating in the wild, which had nothing to do with skinny, hairless, domesticated me” (Eugenides 522). Thus, as she confesses, he/she feels inferior to and envious of them.

Injecting the intersex persons with the feeling of awkwardness and worthlessness and leading them to isolation and depression are not the only manifestations of violence against them; worst of all, they are divested of their status as humans because, as Georgiann Davis and Sharon Preves recount the significance of anatomical sex, “without a neatly assigned sex, a child might not be fully a person” (80). According to Ruth Evans, “Sexual ambiguity, now and in the past, provokes first surprise, then confusion, and then — all too often— fear and hostility” (118). But Cal/lie faces even a broader range of manners. As Eugenides has delved into Cal/lie’s life, he/she mainly faces some certain reactions for the way his/her body is made, which all of them indicate the rejection of him/her as a human being or, at least, as a normal one: pity, fear, surprise, excitement, abandonment and opportunism.

As you read the novel, you can see how profoundly Milton, Tessie and Desdemona take pity on Cal/lie to have turned out to be an intersex, and besides, feel Milton and Tessie’s dread. Milton and Tessie’s first reaction to the news about the condition of their child was refusal, just like everybody first facing a catastrophe: “My parents had at first refused to believe the emergency room doctor’s wild claim about my anatomy” (Eugenides 703). But after visiting a couple of doctors and with all of them acknowledging ambiguity of Cal/lie’s body, they started to see him/her like a sick person, or, better to say, like a creature of queer formation which was marked by some peculiarities that an average

human was not, normally, and, thereby, feel a great sympathy and sorrow for their child together with a feeling of dread and fear. Cal/lie feels their emotions and says,

I knew that my situation, whatever it was, was a crisis of some kind. I could tell that from my parents' false, cheery behavior ... It pained them to watch me advance across the sidewalk toward the hospital entrance. It was terrifying to see your child in the grip of unknown forces. For a year now they had been denying how I was changing, putting it down to the awkward age. 'She'll grow out of it,' Milton was always telling my mother. But now they were seized with a fear that I was growing out of control. (Eugenides 709-712)

Based on an American belief that everything was treatable by doctors, Milton and Tessie did their utmost to exhort Cal/lie to receive injections and have operation because, as Cal/lie states, they were trying to save their child from "humiliation, lovelessness, even death" (Eugenides 781), the probable threats to their child's life which had possibly been among the reasons they had compassion for him/her, the same feeling which tore Desdemona's heart out at the end of the novel, when she was informed by Cal/lie about his/her transformation from female to male: "I'm sorry, honey. I'm sorry this happen to you ... I'm so sorry, *Honey*" (Eugenides 926).

Cal/lie's worth as a human is more obviously brought into question by his/her potential sexual partners when they leave him/her because his/her external genitalia does not match the common expectations about masculinity:

In Brussels, I fell in love with a bartender who claimed not to care about the uncommon way I was made. I was so grateful that I asked her to marry me ... She refused my proposal and ran off with someone else. Who has there been since? A few here and there, never long-lasting. And so, without permanence I have fallen into the routine of my incomplete seductions ... With Olivia and every woman who came after her there has been this knowledge to deal with: the great fact of my condition. (Eugenides 561-562)

"Humans are socialized to interact with people through the lens of gender, which is arguably inseparable from sex. Bodies serve as gendered symbols that communicate to other one's sex" (Frank 128) and, from other side, the world of intimate relationships and dating highly valorizes heteronormativity so, Cal/lie can almost never preserve a long-term relationship with the women to whom he/she becomes sexually attracted because he/she knows that his/her variation, or, better to say, his/her atypical genitalia is not what the women expect to see when a man is undressed. Consequently, in many cases it is simply the fear of rejection that holds Cal/lie back from sharing bodies and keeping a relationship:

When I meet someone I like and who seems to like me, I retreat. There are lots of nights out in Berlin when, emboldened by a good-value Rioja, I forget my physical predicament and allow myself to hope. The tailored suit comes off. The Thomas Pink shirt, too. My dates can't fail to be impressed by my physical condition ... But the final protection, my roomy, my discreet boxer shorts,

these I do not remove. Ever. Instead I leave, making excuses. I leave and never call them again. (Eugenides 194-195)

Thus, given the importance of hegemonic sex and gender and the cultural dominion of heterosexuality, finding and keeping a sexual partner remains an enduring trouble throughout his/her whole life.

From Other side, there are persons in whose eyes Cal/lie is like a windfall by his/her means they can pave their way to money, success and power: Bob Presto and Dr. Peter Luce. For Presto Cal/lie was nothing more than a circus clown who could win him throngs of customers and help him surpass his rivals by the way his/her body was made and he had become assured of that at the very moment he undressed Cal/lie to take him/her to bed, after he/she had been injured by the tramps: "I knew it. I knew it when I saw him at the steak house ... I knew he was a gold of mine" (Eugenides 847). Of course, it was not the first time Cal/lie was treated like anything thing other than a human; just some weeks ago, he/she had been the scarce, wonderful case study of Dr. Luce through whom he had a lot to contribute to the world of science and it was not difficult for Cal/lie to discover his excitement for taking that golden opportunity: "He was trying to act casual, but I could see he was excited. I was an extraordinary case, after all. He was taking his time, savoring me. To a scientist like Luce I was nothing less than a sexual or genetic Kaspar Hauser ... I was a living experiment dressed in white corduroys and a Fair Isle sweater" (Eugenides 715-716).

The time that Cal/lie had in the clinic was more of a blight than a treatment; in fact, what he/she experienced there was a traumatic experience that afflicted his/her psyche with irrecoverable detriments: "It's often said that a traumatic experience early in life marks a person forever, pulls her out of line, saying, 'stay there. Don't move.' My time at the clinic did that to me" (Eugenides 744). The way Cal/lie was behaved in the clinic was not appropriate to a child of his/her age; at a tender age, Cal/lie was asked to get undressed before either doctors or photographers and expose the most private part of his/her body to examination and gazes over and over again, the act which was extremely shameful for him/her since he/she had always refused taking off his/her clothes before others — for example, as he/she used to do in the locker room of the school— due to the ambiguity of his/her body and genitalia. Also, the clinic was where Dr. Luce, openly, talked to Cal/lie about genitals, sexual desire and sex, issues which were all taboos for Cal/lie even more than they could be for a usual person, with special regard to the fact that his/her genitalia and sexual desire had been long kept a secret, as not being regarded normal or acceptable. More to the point, As Cal/lie explains, the family in which he/she has been raised is not a type of free-thinking one, and Cal/lie's parents had never talked to their child about such intimate issues before so, it's truly embarrassing and annoying for Cal/lie having Dr. Luce bringing them to the surface: "'Are you sexually attracted to girls?' Luce said this quickly. It was like a tap from a rubber hammer. But I stifled my reflex" (Eugenides 730). Dr. Luce even further reinforces Cal/

lie's sense of shame by showing him/her the naked body of Annie and a pool boy in the movie *Annie Delivers to Your Door* and asking him/her directly about his/her sexual desire:

In a straightforward voice Luce asked from the Darkness,

"Which one turns you on?"

"Excuse me?"

"Which one turns you on? The woman or the man?"

The true answer was neither. But truth would not do. Sticking to my cover story, I managed to get out, very quietly, "the boy." (Eugenides 734-735)

Yet, as it appears to me, the most severe level of violence that Cal/lie undergoes in the clinic is due to the desire for the act of correction which both Dr. Luce and Cal/lie's parents (as institutions for the function of prevailing norms of sex and gender) seek to apply on his/her body coercively, what Cal/lie later documents in his/her book as cutting him/her off. Their tendency is indicative of a belief in "alliance between bodies (female *or* male) and gender identity (girl *or* boy, woman *or* man)" (Hird 1068) and "symptomatic of a heteronormative imperative" (Carroll 187). Here, as Ellen K. Feder elucidates the aim of treatment of the intersex persons, what is accentuated is not Cal/lie's health but his/her normalcy—which is dictated through the hegemonic conception of gender and sex and motivated by idealizations such as, as Dr. Luce says, "the ability to marry and pass as a normal woman" (Eugenides 765). Surely, during an operation Cal/lie will suffer so much pain, without even being have to (for it's not necessary for Cal/lie's health to undertake an operation) but looking normal, or, in other words, complying with the common sense of gender and sex is the greatest concernment that shall be kept at all costs, otherwise, Cal/lie's survivability and livability will be seriously at risk due to his/her vulnerability to the society which will find him/her abhorrent to their common sense. This is well demonstrated in Dr. Luce's recommendation for Cal/lie and his kind of justification for persuading the couple to heed his advice:

The treatment I'd recommend for your daughter is twofold. First, hormone injections. Second, cosmetic surgery. The hormone treatments will initiate breast development and enhance her secondary female sex characteristics. The surgery will make Cal/lie look exactly like the girl she feels herself to be. In fact, she will be that girl. Her outside and inside will conform. She will look like a normal girl. Nobody will be able to tell a thing. And then Callie can go on and enjoy her life (Eugenides 750).

CONCLUSION

The present research, has tried to demonstrate that sex, gender and sexual orientation act as fertile grounds of subalternity in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*. It also sheds light on subalternity of the intersex protagonist of the story, Cal/lie, as the main concern of this study, and the lesbian character, Sourmelina. To this end, the account of subordination that Gramsci has put forth in his Prison Notebooks through terms such as "hegemony," "civil society," and "common sense" plays a pivotal role. Furthermore, it takes benefit from Judith

Butler's explanations of the role of norms in "normalization" of the normative and "estrangement" of the non-normative.

As Eugenides has depicted in *Middlesex*, in a society there are more fertile grounds for inequality and oppression than class and there are more kinds of subalterns than the proletariat. Although sex, gender and sexuality as categories are not oppressive by themselves, they can be inexorably oppressive when they find a normative definition and have that definition hegemonic. In the societies that Cal/lie lives there are hegemonic concepts of sex, gender and sexuality, and they are well produced and disseminated through civil society institutions. Stephanides family, Orthodox religion, New York Public library, Sophie Sassoon's beauty salon and Ed's barbershop epitomize the mediums through which heterosexuality, dimorphism and masculine/feminine binary are shored up. The dominant ideology of gender and sex has thoroughly permeated the Stephanides family (where they live gendered lives in accordance with their sex) and subsequently find its way through Cal/lie's mind and crystalize his/her identity, worldview, idealizations and desires. The Orthodox religion supports "sex-defined roles", as Dr. Luce declares, and contributing exclusively to the legitimacy of heterosexuality, plagues Sourmelina and little Cal/lie with a deep sense of guilt. The New York Public Library is where hermaphrodites are equal to monsters. In both Sophie Sassoon's beauty parlor and Ed's barbershop clearly gendered appearances (compatible with masculine/feminine dichotomy) are fortified to be finally attractive for the opposite-sex. The individuals' common sense will be to a great extent, unconsciously and automatically, the outcome of the society in which they live and in this case the institutions play a key role in formation of a society. The institutions articulating and diffusing norms pre-exist Cal/lie and when he/she enters the world he/she finds him/herself surrounded by a multitude of sexual and gender norms.

In a society pre-set with normative or hegemonic concepts of sex, gender and sexuality Cal/lie does not have any problem with the norms until puberty. But as soon as his/her body starts challenging the dichotomy of male/female and, subsequently, the dichotomy of masculine/feminine and heterosexual rules, he/she is no longer recognizable and intelligible for the society. Thus Cal/lie turns into an outsider, a subaltern, and starts undergoing different forms of oppression, which embody what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence". He/ She becomes inclined to isolation to be safe from the pieces of conversation exchanged between Milton and Tessie about his/her abnormality and loses self-confidence because he/she thinks his/her rugged appearance has nothing to do with the socially and culturally expected female delicacy. He/she is treated as less-than-human in several ways. Milton, Tessie and Desdemona call into question his/her dignity as a human by taking pity on him for turning to be an intersex. Cal/lie's worth as a human is more considerably brought into question by the girls with whom he/she hopes to build a relationship, where he/she is always abandoned on the account of his/her in-between sexual organ not matching heterosexual rules. Because Cal/lie occupies the middle ground between male and female

he/she does not account as a human being for Bob Presto and Dr. Luce and instead serves as clown for rounding up customers in *Sixty-Niners* and a case study through whom Luce intends to add to his fame. Yet the most severe level of violence that Cal/lie undergoes is in Dr. Luce's clinic, when his/her parents and Dr. Luce insist on coercive correction of his/her body by hormone shots and surgery to make him/her compatible with the hegemonic male/female dichotomy and, subsequently the masculine/feminine dichotomy and heterosexuality to not be abhorrent to the people's common sense and be able to live.

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