

The Ethics of Hermaphrosthetics

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- Why study intersex?
- What of its relationship to literature?

Anzaldúa's “mestiza consciousness”

- Metaphorical representation of the intersex
- Intersectional: race & gender & sexuality & language & nation &...
- Idealization

Corpus

- *Middlesex*, Jeffrey Eugenides (2002)
- *Caramelo*, Sandra Cisneros (2002)
- *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston (1978)

What is hermaphrosthetics?

- a theoretical framework by which one can analyze a piece of discourse – more specifically here, literary works of fiction – in which there is a conscious or less conscious attempt to construct an idea of an identity that is ambiguous, undetermined, fluid in terms of gender and racial/ethnic characteristics.
- “hermaphroditic thinking”: philosophy, theory, cultural critique and creativity as/ outside intersex subject
- formal experimentation
- self-fashioning/performative
- political/social aspiration

Examples

- Symbolism (*coincidentia oppositorum*): the “woman warrior”
- Border crossings: mixed race characters, linguistic hybridity
- Multiplication/fragmentation of voices, in particular, switch between feminine and masculine voices
- Genre bending // gender bending (i.e, mix of autobiography and myth)

Terminology: “hermaphrosthetics”

- “Hermaphrodite” and “hermaphroditic” claimed by community
- Intertextuality/Intersexuality
- Intersex = fluidity; Hermaphrodite = hybridity
- Queer theory, QOC theory’s use of these concepts. postcolonial theory; poststructuralists

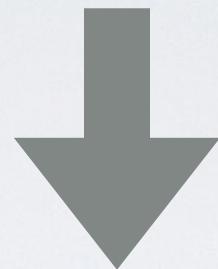
Critics

- Criticism of Eugenides' representation of intersex
- Criticism over authenticity (Identity politics)
- Critics who have sensed this metaphorical use of the intersex or hermaphrodite
- My own theoretical framework

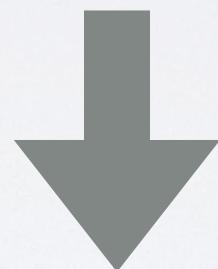
Questions

- Main critics are sociologists or speak from personal experience (Holmes, Hillman, etc.). Who gets to speak about what? (identity politics)
- Should certain subjects not be represented in fiction? What about creative freedom?
- Can imaginary/creative representations change people's outlook on certain ideas, and change attitudes and policy?
- Utopian representations (Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness")

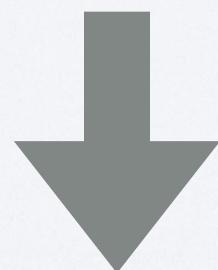
formal experimentation



self fashioning/performative



political/social aspiration



change

Thank you!

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