Gender Fluidity and Subversion of Socio-Cultural Power Structures in Eugenides' Middlesex: Exploring Performativity

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Abstract
The aim of the research is to explore Eugenides' Middlesex through the lens of Butler's concept of performativity that focuses on gender fluidity and identity formation through the socio-cultural repeated acts. The theory of performativity investigates Butler's idea that gender norms are constructed and sustained within the society. The theoretical application of performativity on Middlesex explores the challenges related to the conventional understanding of gender by analysing the characters as fluid-gendered identities. The research explores the ability of performative acts to both strengthen and subvert the dominant power structures by examining how the protagonist navigates and breaches socio-cultural norms, emphasizing the possibility for fundamental cultural change and resistance. The methodology used in the research is qualitative approach that focuses on the thematic analysis. The purpose of the research is to examine the subversion of gender stereotypes in Middlesex. The significance of the research is to investigate the formation of fluid-gendered identities which are regarded as unnatural entities by conventional wisdom.
Keywords: Performativity, Identity Formation, Fluid-Gendered Identities, Socio-Cultural Norms, Gender Stereotypes

1. Introduction

The purpose of the research is to investigate gender issues in Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides through Butler's theory of performativity. It explores the challenges of the protagonist related to the concept of fixed gender identities. It also analyzes the ways in which Eugenides uses unique narrative styles, language and the techniques of character development that transform the gender identity of the protagonist. The research investigates the social construction of gender in Middlesex by applying the components of Butler's theory of performativity such as gender as performance, social resistance and intersectionality.

The research highlights the themes of gender fluidity, subversion of socio-cultural gender norms, inversion of gender binaries, resistance against fixed gender categories, exploration of self and feminism in Middlesex. The reason to explore the fluid gendered patterns is to comprehend how characters of the Middlesex resist and reconsider socio-cultural norms that attempt to constrain their gender identities. By exploring the ways in which the characters represent, perform, resist and navigate gender, the research seeks to examine the deceptive limitations that have been constructed about gender and demonstrates the ways in which subversion of socio-cultural gender norms can be a source of autonomy and innovation. The research aims to contribute a deeper comprehension of gender identity that encourages gender diversity and questions the socio-cultural norms. The research also examines the connection of the protagonist's actions to the Butler's concept of "stage performances", where actors practise and rehearse the traditional gender expressions, while also adding their own individual perspectives and approaches to the performances. The "stage" can be regarded as a social and cultural arena, where people perform and repeat gender norms, and where gender limitations are constantly challenged and battled (Butler, 2004). The research investigates the protagonist's gender performances that perpetuate and maintain socio-cultural norms, while also providing subtle subversions and transformations that question the traditional gender standards.

The research takes the feminist stance based on the stereotypical gender norms. Feminism is known as a movement led by women to end oppression in the male dominant society (Haradhan, 2022). It consistently struggles against all forms of feminist discrimination. It is actually an approach that makes an effort to comprehend gender roles. It advocates for equal privileges and liberties for both genders (Haradhan, 2022). There were two waves of feminism. The first wave (1890-1920) was a social movement in which women struggled to seek their basic rights including education, vote and jobs in Britain and America. The second wave (1960-1980) was also known as Women's liberation movement which aimed to address gender discrimination in the society. It also examined the issues related to sexuality and subverted conventional norms by seeking reproductive and sexual freedom (Guo, 2016). The French and American feminists including Hélène Cixous, Laura Mulvey and Julia Kristeva also contributed distinct concepts and ideas to feminist theory and criticism. They criticised the established cultural norms for categorizing individuals either as men and women. They questioned the traditional gender stereotype and campaigned for more equality and respect for women.

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Butler focuses on the dynamic nature of gender by subverting the established gender categories as well as fixed gender roles. She criticizes essentialist concept of gender by examining the role of power dynamic in shaping the conventional gender norms. She argues that sex and gender are not biologically determined but socially constructed through repeated actions (Forsyth, 2023). She considers that gender behaviours and actions contribute to the development of gender identity rather than just illustrating previously present gender characteristics. This perspective creates opportunities for oppressed individuals and urges to disrupt traditional gender classification. Butler claims that the expression "women" has become a contentious and ambiguous signifier, producing anxiety and provoking disputes about various correlations with sexuality, status, race and sexuality (Forsyth, 2023). Butler's point of view promotes the reconsideration of traditional gender categories in the context of advocating for the privileges of all individuals particularly women. She encourages people to challenge the rigidity of gender binaries and acknowledges that gender is a culturally constructed that defies conventional gender categories.

The research investigates oppressed female characters in Middlesex to highlight the feminist discourse. Eugenides depicts the efforts of Cal as a woman to adjust in patriarchal society that promotes fixed gender binaries. Cal experiences shame in accepting his identity as hermaphrodite due to societal pressure and begins to doubt his own self. The other female characters such as Desdemona and Tessie also struggle to conform the established feminine roles of male-dominated society. The research also analyzes the fluid gender identity of the protagonist by examining his dressing, attitude and relationships. The research focuses on the subversion of socio-cultural norms and the social resistance by analysing transformation of the protagonist.

The research aligns with the SDG goal 5, gender equality, which supports all women and eradicates gender discrimination. It has various targets that focus on providing a space to women where they feel secure. The research also examines the challenges that prevail in the patriarchal society. The research deals with the performative aspect of gender that suggests the acceptance of all gender identities. The goal of SD5 complements the research as they both examine the experiences and challenges of all gender identities. Therefore, the research aims to examine the deconstruction of gender binaries and subversion of socio-cultural performances.

1.1. Aim

The research aims to highlight significance of the non-heteronormative structures. The focus of the research is to explore the formation of fluid gender identity by examining internal conflicts of the protagonist regarding his sexuality. The research also examines the socio-cultural impact of the protagonist on the traditional understanding of gender norms.

1.2. Objectives

- To analyze the gender fluidity of the protagonist through Butler's concept of performativity in Middlesex
- To investigate deconstruction of the gender binaries and subversion of the socio-cultural gender norms in Middlesex

1.3. Significance

The research is significant as it integrates Butler's theory of performativity to the text, Middlesex, which offers the better understanding of how fluid gender identity questions and alters the established gender stereotypes. It examines the resistance of the protagonist against the fixed gender notions through his socio-cultural performances. The research examines the gender issues of the protagonist in order to accept his fluid-gendered patterns. The research also uncovers the manners in which people can question and reshape socio-cultural norms, contributing to the proper comprehending of gender fluidity.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How does the protagonist subvert socio-cultural system of binary opposition based on gender in Middlesex?
2. How does Butler's theory of performativity reconstruct the gender identity of the protagonist in Middlesex?

2. Literature Review

The examination of self-quest is the major concern in Pishkar's work, "Eugenides' Middlesex: the Lacanian perspective". He applies Lacanian theory on the text, Middlesex, to investigate Calliope's journey as an intersex individual. Pishkar (2022) employs the components of Lacan's theory including mirror stage, desire, object, symbolic order on the selected text to examine the protagonist's exploration of his true self. According to him, the resistance of the protagonist against the gender preconception creates dominant traits in his personality which leads to the development of narcissistic personality disorder. He also discusses the Lacan's concept of 'Other' through the character of Cal's mother. He examines the way Cal's mother nurtures him to be the perfect American girl and how his character is created in the mirror stage by his mother's longing to be Other. He highlights the challenges of the protagonist to subvert social norms and values in the light of Lacan's theory. To summarize, Pishkar examines the aspects of narcissism, sexual desires and Objects in the text, Middlesex, through the perspective of Lacan.

Self-transformation is the chief objective in Ciglanic's work, "Greek-American Identity in Jeffrey Eugenides' Middlesex", that focuses on the ethnicity of the protagonist in Middlesex. Ciglanic (2019) explores Green-American family that reintroduces their identities through adaptation and familiarization in contemporary industrialism. He examines the transformation of generations in Middlesex and analyses the ways in which the characters integrate their heritage into their new identities and routines. He examines the conflict between maintaining Greek cultural values and integrating them into American culture. He explains his point of view by giving example of Desdemona who maintains Greek values while Cal negotiates the gap between his two personalities. He investigates the effects of social factors, churches, families and communities in Middlesex through the lens of ethnicity. He explores Middlesex as an epic story of a family over multiple generations that forms their new identities. He explores the connection of the protagonist and other characters to the ethnicity of their ancestors. Thus, he analyses the ways in which the characters of Middlesex build their Greek-American identities in America.

According to Athanassakis (2021), the trauma and its impacts on the identity is investigated in Middlesex through the character of Cal. He explores the ways in which the protagonist deals with the trauma and the horrors of Greek-Turkish war. He uses psychoanalytic theory to investigate the emergence of trauma in the life of the protagonist. He delves into the experiences of Cal's life where he alienate himself from the society. He discusses the pain and agony of surgeries imposed on Cal in order to fit him into fixed gender categories. He also explains the psychological trauma of Desdemona who considers herself responsible for Cal's situation. He suggests that traumas can be passed down through the generations as discussed in the text. He explores the anxiety of Cal's grandparents as they leave their homeland in order to adjust into new culture. The efforts to retain Greek cultural identity while integrating into American culture cause conflicts that influence the successive generations. Hence, Athanassakis examines the ways in which trauma influence the identity of the characters in the Middlesex.

The exploration of diasporic meditation in Middlesex is the prominent theme that has been discussed by Magar in his research, "Diasporic Meditations in Eugenides' Middlesex". According to him, diasporic events play significant role in shaping the identity of Cal. He delves into the intricacy of diasporic identity of the protagonist as he struggles with the issues of the cultural traditions. He analyzes Desdemona's adherence to Greek traditions such as religious values and conventional household chores which depict her struggle to sustain cultural values in the diaspora. He explores the conflict between Desdemona and Milton which depicts the complexity between modernity and tradition. He also depicts the demands and obstacles of integration, particularly among the second and third generations. He exemplifies characters such as Milton, Lefty and Desdemona's son, to depict the delicate balance between adopting American culture and respecting Greek heritage. He highlights the themes of affiliation and marginalization in Greek-American group as well as in the larger American culture. He analyses Eugenides' language and narrative style in order to understand diasporic event in Middlesex. To conclude, Magar explores the ways in which diasporic experiences influence the identity of the protagonist and other characters in Middlesex.

2.1. Research Gap

The researches that are previously conducted on Middlesex focus on psychoanalytical, post-colonial, androgynous and modernism concepts. However, the research investigates the fluid gendered patterns in Middlesex through the lens of Butler's concept of performativity. The research examines the socio-cultural impact of the protagonist in transforming the traditional and individual understanding of gender through his socio-cultural performances. It also investigates the reconstruction of the protagonist's socio-cultural identity despite of the challenges that prevail in the society.

3. Research Methodology and Framework

The research explores identity transformation of the protagonist in Middlesex by using a qualitative research approach. It mainly focuses on the thematic analysis and examines the struggles of the protagonist to embrace his new fluid-gendered identity. The thematic analysis focuses on the careful examination of the selected text with special focus on the themes, symbols and motifs related to gender issues and subversion of traditional norms. The theoretical application on the chosen texts is Butler's concept of gender performativity from Gender Trouble. The theory undermines the conventional depiction of gender identities by focusing on the gender fluidity and subversion of fixed gender norms. The research examines the transformation of the protagonists by applying the components of Butler's theory such as performativity, gender fluidity, intersectionality, subversion of socio-cultural traditions and defiance against fixed gender binaries. It also explores the idea of Butler that gender is performed through repeated acts by analysing the actions of the protagonists.

Butler (1999) explores the assumption of feminist theory: established identities and stable subjects. She contends that classifications like women are also influenced by other aspects such as social and economic position. She believes that gender expressions and behaviours contribute to gender character development rather than simply expressing pre-existing identities. The approach offers possibilities for disruptive acts and tendencies to question conventional gender

classification. In any event, they highlight the reliance on pre-patriarchal paradigms, which may misunderstand the intricacies of power dynamics. The recent developments have disrupted the idea of women as an established issue, necessitating an increased awareness of gender. By accepting the performative approach on gender and appreciating its various junctions, the theory can expand into a greater movement. She urges to consider gender as fluid, challenge conventional gender standards, and successfully confront the restrictions of symbolic language in order to march towards gender equality. She questions the assumption of a stable and broad classification for women, as well as the notion of a widespread patriarchy that continuously oppresses women in all social circumstances. It promotes the reconsideration of conventional classifications of gender in the context of advocating for the freedoms of specific individuals, such as women.

Cixous (1975) believes that the conventional gender concepts have their foundations in hierarchical mechanisms that suppress women's voices and dismiss their experiences. In her work, "The Laugh of Medusa", she claims that women must reclaim their voices in order to question the prevailing discourses and establish alternative ways of expressing themselves. She also presents the idea of "écriture féminin", which seeks to subvert the old dichotomies and build an innovative and expressive writing style that conveys the perspectives of women. It suggests that conventional literature has been heavily influenced by patriarchal ideas, ultimately eliminating or demeaning female perspectives. Like Butler, Cixous' work also attempts to subvert the dichotomies that drive conventional gender classifications and advocates a more dynamic perspective on gender identity.

Kristeva (1982) explores that gender undermines the conventional notions of identity in her works. She believes that gender is not an immutable or fundamental category, rather an unstable and flexible construct which is affected by social factors and discourses (23). For Butler, both sex and gender are also constructed by society. Kristeva argues that the masculine and feminine are not completely distinct, but rather linked and interrelated that reside on a spectrum. She poses the idea of "the feminine" as a disruptive agent that questions gender roles and institutions. Like Butler, she also questions the binary gender categories and patriarchal discourses by presenting the dynamic and fluid aspect of gender identity.

The research analyzes the performative acts of Cal while embracing his true identity in the patriarchal society. Butler asserts that the essential challenge is to identify the tactics of the disruptive reiteration helped by those structures, and to reinforce the regional opportunities of action through engaging with the forms of reiteration that create identity and, thus, offer the intrinsic potential for disputing them. The performative acts of the protagonist contribute to the journey of self-discovery and transformation of the gender identity. The focus of the research is to examine the performative actions of the protagonist that promote the idea of gender fluidity.

4. Analysis of Intersex Gender Identity in Middlesex

Middlesex offers a comprehensive examination of gender evolution, exploring the protagonist's efforts to reconcile her physical identity with her gendered self while also digging into the ancestral traditions and social norms that establish her journey to self-realization. Eugenides depicts Calliope's storytelling of three generations and their experiences. Calliope discusses about her own existence as a hermaphrodite. She talks about "5-Alpha-Reductase" defect which causes her to be intersex (Eugenides 3). She emerges as a girl but possesses a masculine genetic makeup. She illustrates her battle to determine her gender identity and sexuality. She appears to perform different unstable actions from youth to maturity that tend to swing between adhering to severe heteronormative conventions of masculinity and femininity and the sexuality associated with the both genders. Calliope's intense, unpredictable condition of gender identity can be interpreted as a voyage of gender transformation, enabling her to change into Cal. Butler's theory of performativity is used to demonstrate how Cal deconstructs his gender identity into a stable one.

4.1. Gender Issues and Subversion of Binary Gender System

Eugenides presents the socio-cultural system of binary opposition based on gender through the Stephanides' family in Middlesex. Callie's biological sex is determined by a genetic disease, therefore her journey begins before birth. Before Callie's birth, it has been committed by conventional system that tightly enforces gender standards and are prepared to pass them down to future generations. The Callie's family is very conservative and follows the gender binary system. At that time, gender identities were firmly defined, with males in the broader social realm and females in control of the household and personal lives. For instance, Desdemona uses a silver spoon to predict a child's gender. She thinks that spinning of spoon indicates a girl, whereas the backward and forward motion indicates a male. Desdemona's thinking reflects Walter Scott's (the Scottish novelist) definition of gender expectations that are not intrinsic, instead they're a consequence of social and historical circumstances (105). Desdemona spends her day peacefully by developing silkworm cocoons and cooking food, while Lefty goes to Bursa's jammed streets to distribute the silk to the villagers. Desdemona's character shows a passive acceptance of her surroundings, as she silently suffers the patriarchal customs and demands placed on her. Desdemona demonstrates how societal standards can limit personal ambition and freedom, especially for women. Eugenides' representation of Desdemona highlights Butler's concept

that gender regulation through conventions and the imposition of gender categories is a way in which "patriarchal power consolidates its hegemony, marginalizing and delegitimizing those who deviate from these norms" (43). It mirrors Simone de Beauvoir's (the French philosopher) idea that feminine identity is a social and cultural construct that is acquired and implemented (267). It illustrates how cultural gender norms and binary categories are utilized to perpetuate hierarchical control, while excluding people who fail to comply.

Eugenides employs another character, Tessie as a prime instance of a housewife who is completely committed to her children and husband's desires. Tessie exemplifies Bourgeois virtues as de Beauvoir claims, such as loyalty, endurance, and affection for home (534). Milton represents the dominant masculinity by being "heterosexual, violent, and successful," displaying almost sixty Hercules Hot Dogs, and having authority over familial matters (Lynch 412). When Milton and Tessie want to have a daughter, they fantasize about "dark –eyed little girl" before her birth, following gender conventions (Eugenides 20). Callie, unaware and reliant, is handed to the Stephanides family in January 1960, before her journey towards "individuation" (Butler 23). In the hospital room, Dr. Philobosian stretches the baby's legs and reveals her gender, marking the start of Callie gender identity construction as a girl centred on the mirrored link between sex and gender. It suggests that Callie's gender identity is already established by the society, emphasizing how gender is forced on people from birth. It corresponds with Butler's concept of gender performativity, which suggests that gender identity is a socially developed performance rather than a natural characteristic (33). In the same way, Joan Wallach Scott, the American gender theorist, also suggests that gender is the social categorization of sexual distinctions (1067). The gender identity, actions and norms are acquired and developed rather than inherent. It highlights the fluidity and multiplicity of gender.

Middlesex begins with Calliope's narration, "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl…and then again; as a teenage boy" (Eugenides 3). It explains Calliope's gender transformation journey, beginning with her first appearance as a girl and her expansion of gender identity, progressing to Callie's finding of her intersex situation and the gender identity dissonance that ensues, and culminating in Calliope's final evolution to Cal as an adult. The standards of femininity instilled on Callie are repressive, leading to adherence to cultural standards. She has to first negotiate the restricted feminine gender standards in order to transform her gender identity. With the passage of time, Callie's parents shape their daughter's feminine gender identity by using conventional norms, providing her dolls for fun and staying her under strict surveillance, despite allowing Chapter Eleven to take full advantage of great autonomy and perform challenging duties, such as exploring experiments in a the laboratory. Butler's idea of gender performativity states, "Gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (24). Erving Goffman, the Canadian-American sociologist, also describes that the public display of oneself is an act of performance defined by cultural standards and demands (26). Butler's characterization of performative attainment and Goffman's concept of performance both highlight the importance of societal factors in transforming individual identity and action.

Calliope's gender identity is determined by her parents' desires, as she immediately adheres to their concept of feminine characteristics, suggesting how parental pressure impact gender performance and highlighting the conflicts between true gender identity and cultural conditioning. Tessie and Milton have ruined Callie's individuality, or the essence of her "self" to a great extent, but not entirely. The gender conventions have ingrained in Callie to the extent that they have destroyed her gender identity. Calliope is reared as Callie and maintains her gender identity in accordance with heteronormative feminine norms until she is in her late teens. Eugenides refers to Calliope's characterization of Callie's eyes as "Cleopatra eyes" (278). She connects Callie's eyes to Cleopatra, a well-known ideal of feminine elegance from ancient Egypt. The similarity transfers the picture of Cleopatra's attractiveness and femininity to Callie, highlighting Callie's feminine and attractive qualities. Callie's actions portray Butler's idea that the cultural conventions control gender actions to develop the gender identities which they assert to represent, instead of merely expressing prior gender identities (25). Kosofsky Sedgwick, the American scholar, supports Butler's notion that the real gender identities, which are frequently multifaceted and incompatible, are not only descriptive but also expressive of the classifications in which they reside (123). It highlights the ways in which Callie's gender identity is constructed through her recurrent actions of feminine norms.

Calliope's involvement with conventionally feminine activities and ambitions indicates her early obedience to cultural standards of femininity, underscoring how gendered behaviours and duties are obtained and enacted. Calliope discusses that she "combs her long hair" and usually borrows mascara from her mother to apply it on eyes (Eugenides 278). The femininity in Callie's presentation becomes evident in her actions rather than through juxtaposition. Callie goes to female salon several times for facial hair removal and shaves her legs, following conventional beauty standards (311). She defines such maintenance as a demand from the culture and she tries fulfil in order to conform the established gender standards. She explores artificial beauty products frequently that represent the feminine attitude. The term "painted our faces" suggests that Callie applies a lot of cosmetics, which adds to her attempt to portray herself as feminine and lovely to the world (Eugenides 311). It shows that Callie's displays of a feminine personality are demonstrated to be inspired by two female superstars who embody feminine characteristics, Maria Callas and

Barbra Streisand. She views mimicking these two superstars as a method to meet the established gender presentations of heterosexual femininity. Eugenides' choice of female celebrities may also be a way of demonstrating the shift in Calliope's performances from youth to adulthood. Callie's performance depicts Butler's idea of performativity that states, "The repetition of performative acts establishes the illusion of a coherent gender identity, masking the constructed nature of gender" (136). Butler's idea also fits in with Goffman's concept that gender performances are gender identity displays of the individuality, and these acts are structured and aimed for social attention (7). Eugenides illustrates that Callie does not only mimics her mother's actions and looks, but also follows renowned female models who embody the female characteristics of conventional social standards. It suggests that she performs feminine actions to prevent deviation from established norms.

Eugenides further illustrates Calliope's efforts to follow the conventional gender standards to demonstrate the conflict between her true self and the cultural norms that dictate her to perform in a certain way. When Callie approaches puberty, she observes that her body has not transformed in the same way as her female fellows' bodies. Callie and her mother become concerned about why her body is so distinct from other girls. In order to prevent a gynaecologist examination as per her mother's demands, Callie starts to pretend fake menstrual cycle every month and act more in feminine way (Eugenides 361). It emphasizes Calliope's willingness to go to extremities in order to embody a feminine gender identity and act in accordance with conventional female gender standards. It also illustrates Calliope's shift from merely emulating feminine gender behaviours to engaging in more exaggerated and phony activities that retain her feminine behaviour in the minds of her friends and family. Calliope portrays the fake menstruation as a performance, adding that she "started faking" her menstrual cycle and she "feigned symptoms from headache to fatigue" (Eugenides 361). The terms "faking" and "feigning" emphasize Callie's activities as a performance. Eugenides also makes a link between Calliope's performative development of femininity, as displayed by her fabricated menstrual cycle, and President Nixon's deceitful discourse, demonstrating how gender identity and political authority are both performances based on fantasy, lying, and influence of cultural standards. Butler claims that people offer an interpretation of their gender identity through the means by which they act themselves, which corresponds to Goffman's concept and ideas about the performed self (526). It suggests that Callie's acting of fake menstruation is her performance to present her constructed gender identity in the society.

Eugenides examines Calliope's entrenched stage of gender identity due to her ambiguity and impending gender shift. Calliope's gender uncertainty is evident in her portrayal of two distinct gender identities: female and male. Calliope's first performance as a woman is of femininity during her sexual encounter with Jerome (Eugenides 374). Calliope's early desire to have sex with Jerome can be interpreted as a self-performance. Callie conforms to heterosexual norms by performing sex with Jerome because he is a man and that is the standard for her to follow. The gender performance is brief, as the attention shifts to Callie's gender performance as a male, which happens concurrently. During the performance, Callie realizes that she embodies both male and female characteristics. At this time, Callie understands that she is not female, "but something in between" (Eugenides 374). It adds to Callie's doubt about her sexuality and gender identity, as well as her self-discovery of what she is not, despite how she has been taught and trained. Callie begins her gender identity transformation and journey to break down the self that she has now recognized to be broken and incorrect. Following the event, Callie continues having lesbian sexual experiences with the Obscure Object in the next days. Callie realizes that she has fallen in love with the Obscure Object, who helps her to recognize her sexuality. During such events, Callie becomes more authentic in her sexuality, which is the second trigger for her gender identity transformation. Callie's transformation of gender identity is reflected by Butler's theory of gender performativity. She views gender as spontaneous act that is susceptible to alteration and reconciliation (277). Sedgwick supports Butler's view that people may reconsider and reconstruct their gender identity through practices that allow for improvisation, adaptability, and alteration (126). It highlights Callie's gender as fluid and dynamic that can be transformed according to her choice.

Eugenides presents the response of Callie and her parents after the doctor's confirmation of her intersex sexuality. The doctor thinks that Calliope, who was reared as a female, can be a girl with treatment and an operation, despite being biologically male. Tessie and Milton's resistant perspectives are clear in their talk, as they question Dr. Phil's knowledge. Tessie replies that he should have noticed the problem when Callie came into the world, and the entire scenario might have been solved then (Eugenides 403). Although they may have noticed the clues, their own biases hindered them. When the doctor describes Calliope's challenging gender identity, which results from her youth and female upbringing, Tessie and Milton becomes anxious (Eugenides 414). Butler's concept regarding "hegemonic heterosexuality" that is sustained by "binary regulation of sexuality", that restricts the disruptive diversity of sexual orientations (46). It highlights that men's power over women's bodies, existences, and decisions is a key component of a patriarchal culture, encouraging gender-specific abuse and prejudice.

After recognizing her/his intersexuality, Calliope realizes that her/his gender identity is what she/he has always desired. He challenges established gender norms that necessitate surgery. Suzanna Danuta Walters, the American

sociologist, advocates for an unconventional sexuality that extends beyond the binary of homosexual/heterosexual to embrace anybody who feels excluded by prevailing sexual conventions (8). Cal chooses to maintain his intersex identity rather than become one gender as a female. It allows Calliope to be reborn. The second birth occurs in an operating room after studying the Webster dictionary's definition and accepting the monster analysis that hermaphrodites possess both male and female genitals as well as their additional sexual characteristics (Eugenides 430). He is conscious of his gender identity as an intersex and does not wish to conform to traditional gender norms. He aims to avoid upsetting his parents while yet following his inner desires and ambition. Callie's attitude reflects Butler's view that states, "Gender can be subverted and transformed through deliberate acts of defiance and experimentation" (141). Butler's notion of gender conforms to Michel Foucault's (the French philosopher) idea that reflects gender identity as an endless and variable journey of improvement and development (212). It highlights Callie's journey to deconstruct her established feminine gender identity through the acts of resistance.

4.2. Reconstruction of Gender Identity based on Butler's Performativity Theory

Calliope undergoes significant changes as a consequence of her gender apprehension as demonstrated by her increasingly masculine clothes and behaviours. He is displayed as wearing a loose shirt, pants, male sneakers, and carrying a manly grey luggage. The characterization suggests that Calliope looks more masculine than Callie. The evocation of the shoes as "square-toed shoes" and the luggage as "a businessman's" bag reinforces the male vision (Eugenides 441). Such phrases emphasize a manly appearance, equating it with Cal's looks. Eugenides' representation of Cal's shift in walking approach contributes to the portrayal of masculinity. Cal is defined as possessing a manly appearance that encourages a "tidy, forward thrust" in his gait (Eugenides 441). Calliope further notes that Cal tends to keep his hips firm and allows his upper body shake as he moves,, depicting a more manly walking manner that is purposely different from Callie's walking way. Calliope consciously transforms her walking style to reflect a more male stride, indicated by an unrestrained shoulder movement and a wider posture, rather than the typical feminine swing of the hips (Eugenides 441). Eugenides reveals Cal's significant gender performances that correspond with masculine actions. She demonstrates how Cal's actions shift from feminine to masculine. She also makes it clear that all of these masculine actions are founded on what Calliope previously noticed in conventional society, particularly the alleged male-oriented walking fashion, which can be understood by means of mimicry. Cal's transformation of gender identity suggests Butler's concept of gender performativity that encourages the subversion of gender stereotypes. According to Butler, the inner inversion of the conventional standards for female and male shows that these are changeable and malleable (139). de Beauvoir's notion also supports Butler's view of gender performativity that men and women have the ability to decide and execute their gender identities through combined determination (267). It highlights Cal's struggles to embrace his gender identity through recurrent performances.

Cal's decision to go to the barbershop rather than a beauty parlour, as Callie has done in previous years, represents a shift toward masculine gender performance. Cal's visit to a barbershop boosts his reputation as a man. Furthermore, Cal's choice to trim his hair short to appear more masculine is another means of demonstrating masculine gender identity on the basis of looks, similar to Callie's gender performances of brushing her long hair and applying makeup to sustain a feminine style in order to convey a particular individuality to the community that the society she was acting for would like to see. Eugenides also represents masculine behaviours of Cal that includes, holding "medium-fat" identified cigarettes and smoking them with a cigar blades and matchsticks (41). Cal's reconstruction from Callie to Cal illustrates Butler's idea, showing the fluid nature of his gender identity. Cal then starts practicing masculine gender roles, which begin to appear more comfortable and enable Cal to establish his identity as a man. However, despite his efforts to appear masculine, he is unable to completely transcend the female gender. He is now labelled as a homosexual boy who enjoys male company. Despite having a masculine appearance, the boy's emotions are somehow feminine (Eugenides 445). Eugenides challenges the binary gender paradigm and strict gender classifications in general. Cal's gender identity depicts Butler's concept that "Gender is not a noun, but a verb, a process of becoming, a doing" (105). Pierre Bourdieu's (the French sociologist) view of gender aligns with the Butler's concept that gender is an act of "doing" and "performing" that is constantly reiterated and reconstructed (78). It is evident through Cal's gender identity that is moulded by various physical and cultural variables. Cal's gender identity is not rigid, but rather a fluid performance that is navigated and reconstructed.

Cal believes that hermaphrodites exist in both air and water, and acceptance rather than disapproval allows him to accept himself. He feels fulfilled and recognized, as if he had finished his developmental phase. Eugenides claims that people with non-binary gender identities seem safe and inconspicuous in San Francisco's foggy landscape. It's simple that the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) originated in this city, rather than somewhere else, analysing its history of accepting variety and offering an environment of security for those who fail to adhere with established gender stereotypes (488). Cal explores the performative aspect of his identity by eliminating the fixed gender stereotypes as explained by Butler. Butler states, "The body becomes its gender through a series of acts" that are updated, changed, and cemented with the passage of time (156). It also highlights Foucault stance that gender

development takes place on the body, and gender is enacted and repeated through it (58). Cal's body remains an object of gender creation as he negotiates the multifaceted nature of his intersex identity and the norms that society imposed on him. Cal disrupts established concepts of gender identity by acting and recreating numerous gender performances according to his own observations

Cal admits that he still feels uncomfortable and unable to act in a regular peep show with the voyeurs. He explains about individuals' gaze that creates nervousness for him. His fear of stare illustrates that he is still a woman. Eugenides states, "—Ladies and Gentlemen, behold the god Hermaphroditus! Half woman, half man" (482). It depicts that the author encourages the gender multiplicity by depicting the character of Cal as an intersex. Zora, one of Cal's friends, supports him in accepting his gender identity. She abandons typical gender roles in favour of accepting her non-binary presence as a hermaphrodite. She is a trailblazer, using the phrase 'intersexual' in the 1974, makes her the first individual Cal encounters who has comparable experiences (Eugenides 487-489). Zora teaches Cal that they are not lesser or abnormal and should be proud of themselves. Zora convinces Cal to examine his essence and come to peace with it. Eugenides states that self-acceptance for sexuality and gender can be an exhausting and twisting road: Kudos to Hermaphroditus, people! Octopussy's Garden promotes the dissolving of gender boundaries! We're discussing glam rock crosses gender fluidity, where standards are always being questioned, much like our rock lobsters (485). It demonstrates the fluid nature of gender as explained by Butler that gender identity is formed and fluctuates as a result of the formation of gender connections in the community, and that it is dynamic and fluid (519-520). According to Rachel Carroll, the British author, a memorable literary voice can represent inconsistent or fragmented gendered creatures who do not correspond to cultural standards of clarity, as Judith Butler describes (111). Cal admits that his nights and days are the same as his physical appearance, highlighting this disparity.

Eugenides depicts that Cal's gender construction is successful, as he is both masculine and feminine. The person consists of two parts, one male and other female. The two part got divided with time. It is the reason that all individuals struggle to find their other part. The intersex individuals do not struggle as they possess their two parts together (Eugenides 489). Eugenides also illustrates that Cal engages in his final relationship with Julie and the both partners are prepared to embrace each other for who they are. Julie was once misunderstood for a male, but Eugenides explores the fluidity of gender and how it evolves with time. Eugenides portrayal of Cal's experiences depicts Butler idea of gender as a "fluid and dynamic process" of social production (33). It also relates with Tyson's characterization of sexual orientation as a fluid, fractured, and variable assemblage of various sexualities, relying on deconstruction's observations about individual subjectivity (337). Eugenides depicts that Calliope develops a strong identity and is content with his gender identity. He begins a new life with his lover in Berlin, which recalls him of being separated into two. Calliope's transformation and acceptance of his true gender identity are significant instances of feminist values such as freedom, self-determination, and rejection of repressive structures.

5. Conclusion

The research explores the ways in which Cal dismantles the established gender categories and subverts the influence of binary system on the gender identity through Butler's theory of performativity. Calliope's resistance towards gender classification demonstrate his strategies in which he questions the gender identity and sexuality. The research addresses the importance of Butler's concept of performativity as a theoretical framework to comprehend the intricate interplay of gender identity and cultural authority, depicting the ways in which Middlesex provides a fundamental transformation of gender identity that is both contemporary and everlasting. The protagonist reconstructs his true gender identity through repeated performances. Butler's theory illustrates how his gender identity is repeatedly determined, navigated and challenged which reveal the fragility of binary oppositions based on gender. It sheds light on the protagonist's performances not only to reveal and mould his gender identity but also offers new opportunities for self-determination and societal change. The research also emphasizes on the significance Middlesex as feminist text that questions the individuals to subvert the socio-cultural norms of gender identity. The research examines the acceptance of gender fluidity through the performances of the protagonist to promote the development of inclusive society.

The research provides the framework for investigating the intersectional interpretations of the gender with other classifications of identity, such as class, race, and sexuality. By analysing how these intersections influence and are influenced by gender performances, the future researches may unveil the intricate mechanisms and provide a better understanding of the development of gender identity. The future researches may apply the performative theory to other platforms such as non-literary contents such as movies, theatre, and artwork. It may assist the future researchers to comprehend more clearly how gender performances are created and maintained in various cultural and creative settings. The research aids the future researcher to examine the ways in which gender performances can inspire societal change and advocacy. The future researchers can expand this idea by investigating how gender performances can be

utilized for activism and advancement of society, as well as to question established perspectives and open up new avenues of identification and representation.

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