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凌駕生命與死亡的權力：

傑佛瑞·尤金尼德斯《中性》中的

生命政治、酷異與種族化主體

Power Over Life and Death:

A Biopolitical Analysis of Queer and Racialized Subjects

in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*

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的生命政治、酷異與種族化主體

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and Racialized Subjects in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*

本論文係黃亦敏君（R02122005）在國立臺灣大學外國語
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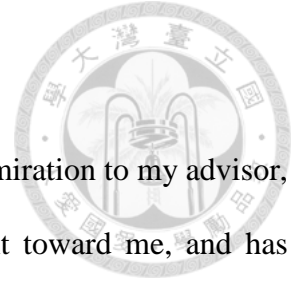
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中文摘要



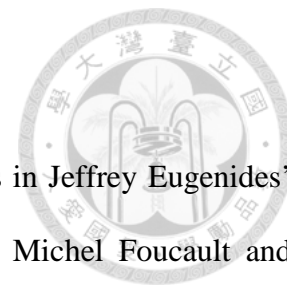
本論文以傑佛瑞·尤金尼德斯所撰之《中性》為文本，探究書中著墨的酷異與種族化主體。透過研讀傅柯與阿岡本對生命政治的剖析，本文認為《中性》一書記載的三代移民家族史揭露了掌權者如何操作生死，治理臣服於其的主體。值得注意的是，生命政治不僅積極干預整體人口的出生與健康，同時也具有撲殺、放逐有害個體，為社會除惡的權力。由書中角色們在美國及歐洲的境遇可知，即使身處不同國度，施政邏輯仍依循雙極進行：一方面以「生」為本，致力提升人口數量與素質，確保國家繁盛，一方面又以「死」為手段，淘汰國家負擔和隱患，去蕪存菁並有效且全面地控管生命。

本文共分三章闡釋《中性》描寫的生命政治主體。一、分項研究傅柯、阿岡本以及姆邊貝論述之生命／死亡政治，試圖爬梳此權力自十九世紀進入當代的形式和流變。二、以書中的他者角色為主軸，分析生命權力在移民身分和性／性別偏異的身體上之運作。三、著重討論種族主義——生命政治在當代的形變之一，推崇生命的同時也放任或蓄意導致他族的死亡。有別於以「生」為主旨的第二章，第三章轉向主體之死，探討生命權力如何處置無用的種族化或移民主體。

當代政治的治理手段凌駕生命與死亡，在主體的四周布下天羅地網，但本文強調，《中性》的主角卡爾最終看似黯然妥協，實則透過保持「中性」、「中立」的身體／身分反抗生命權力——亦即，卡爾的存在本身便是主體逾越的終極體現。

關鍵字：生命政治，傅柯，阿岡本，酷異主體，種族主義，雙性，《中性》

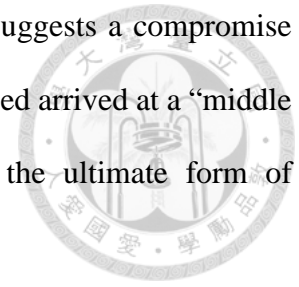
Abstract



This thesis examines the lives of queer and racialized subjects in Jeffrey Eugenides' novel, *Middlesex*. Based on the biopolitical concepts developed by Michel Foucault and advanced by Giorgio Agamben, this thesis argues that *Middlesex*, through the immigrant saga it depicts, parallels a family history with the mechanisms of a biopolitical regime to expose the underlying workings of power upon the living and dying of its subjects. Biopolitics defines a power over not only the biological processes, or life, of a population, but also the social and physical deaths of subjects that have been deemed by the authorities as risky, harmful, and therefore killable. As *Middlesex* has shown through depictions of lives in the U.S. and Europe as lived by its characters, the authority adopts a bipolar technology that simultaneously supports life for economic productivity and prosperity, while exposing disposable bodies to danger in the name of national security to enact an infinite control over individual bodies at the level of population.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores biopolitical concepts in works of Foucault, Agamben, and Achille Mbembe, tracing a genealogy of this form of power that has come to dominate the modern experience. In the second chapter, aspects of the lives of immigrant and sexually deviant characters, who are situated outside the norm in *Middlesex*, are teased out and analyzed in conjunction with the mechanisms through which biopower operates. The third chapter continues to analyze the novel by turning to racism, a modern biopolitical construct that not only makes live, but let die or makes die as well. In contrast to the previous chapter, which investigates the circumstances of survival, this chapter shifts the focus to shed light on the ways biopower constrains or kills unlivable and undesirable lives, particularly racialized or immigrant subjects foreign to the nation.

While it remains debatable as to whether the novel's ending suggests a compromise with the ineluctable power over life and death, the narrator Cal has indeed arrived at a “middle sex” and a “middle ground” that establish his very existence as the ultimate form of transgression.



Keywords: biopolitics, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, queer subjects, racism, intersex,

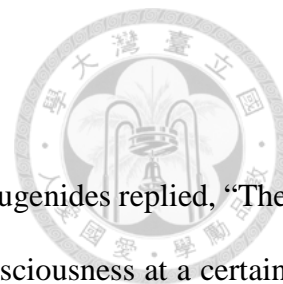
Middlesex

Table of Contents



Acknowledgements.....	ii
中文摘要.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	3
Methodology.....	8
Chapter 1: Exploring the Concept of Biopolitics.....	13
A History of Biopolitics.....	13
A Foucauldian Investigation.....	17
Giorgio Agamben's Meditation.....	28
Biopolitics and the Politics of Death.....	31
Achille Mbembe on Necropolitics.....	33
Biopower and the Sex/Gender System.....	35
Chapter 2: Looking Through the Queer Body.....	38
Cal's Intersexual Body.....	41
The Freakish Body.....	48
Chapter 3: Biopolitics, Racism, and the Immigrant.....	54
On Racism and Biopolitics.....	54
Life as an Immigrant.....	69
Conclusion: A Return to Middlesex.....	80
Works Cited.....	85

Introduction



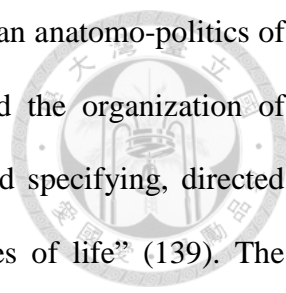
When asked about the social significance of literature, Jeffrey Eugenides replied, “The main purpose of literature, as it always has been, is to map human consciousness at a certain time, remembering your thoughts. . . . [T]hat is what novels are: a mental picture of a certain era” (Eugenides, “Novel”). Nearly a decade after the publication of his debut novel, *The Virgin Suicides*, Eugenides presented another enticing work that drew upon his life as a third-generation Greek immigrant in Detroit’s affluent Grosse Pointe suburbs. Published in 2002, Eugenides’s second novel *Middlesex* was based on his own life experiences. Coming from a family that had to strive for the upper middle-class status and growing up as one of the “ethnic” kids in a private school, at an early age Eugenides became conscious of class and of his Greek identity. Although these differences tended to be less pronounced as time passed by, still he developed a keen sense of self-awareness, which is evident in the sensibility of his novels. For him, novels are “a mental picture of a certain era”: they summon forth the thoughts and sentiments of a people by reflecting on how certain individuals conduct themselves and how their lives can be lived under the complex arrangement of control in a specific time.

Eugenides’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Middlesex* records the historical genealogy of the Stephanides family, whose immigrant journey begins as the Great Fire sweeps over Smyrna. Driven out of their house on the slope of Mount Olympus in Asia Minor, first-generation Stephanides, Lefty and Desdemona, who are brother and sister as well as husband and wife, flee the burning city to build a new life under the industrial clouds of 1920s Detroit, bringing to the robust land not only their Greek heritage but also a gene pool “polluted” by their consanguineous marriage. Unexpected and undetectable, the mutation in blood remains hidden within the second generation amid the clamor of the Motor City. Like their awkwardly Americanized predecessors, Milton and his wife Tessie (who is also his second cousin)

continue to pursue the capitalist American dream despite the country's intense attempts at assimilation and exclusion. Their children Chapter Eleven and Calliope may find themselves even more removed from their ancestral roots, being two generations away from Greece, yet what has been carried across the Atlantic—the incestuous bloodline—is inherited by Calliope (later self-renamed as Cal), who is born with a recessive gene mutation in the fifth chromosome that determines his intersexuality. Raised as a girl but later self-identified as a man, the autobiographic narrator recounts his passage from Calliope to Cal, unfolding a family saga that spans over four decades of birth, death, and rebirth.

For the Stephanides, living and dying are markers of time that nourish their family tree and prefigure the advent of a new generation, but for the state, they are merely numerical data to be processed. The immigrant and queer subjects depicted in the novel are populations especially in need of management as their foreignness and strangeness pose threats to the integrity of society. The purpose of the management is to utilize their lives to enhance national development, and to overlook their deaths to ensure social well-being. Juxtaposing poetic, mythological narratives of Greek-American diasporic life with records of historical events and regulations, Eugenides creates a metaphoric parallel reflecting the double deployment of power that works on and through individuals—a biopower that invests in life, coupled with a necropower that governs death. To explore how *Middlesex*'s characters reveal modern administration of people and population requires an understanding of these two sides of power.

Being the ultimate power over life, biopolitics, drawing from the Foucauldian interpretation, supervises and disciplines the body by imposing regulatory controls over the population, differentiating itself from traditional modes of government authority with its intervention and preservation of the lives of citizenry, and enacting “a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through” (Foucault,



History of Sexuality 139).¹ The two axes of modern state regulation—“an anatomo-politics of the human body” and “a biopolitics of the population”—constituted the organization of biopower which is both “anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life” (139). The ineluctable side of this injunction to live is the exposure of some populations to death. Expanding on Foucault’s biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* uses the word “thanatopolitics” to refer to the fatal aspect of this power over life.² In contemporary forms of sovereignty, it now involves the operations of biopower and a power over death to determine whom to make live and whom to let die. Following the theoretical frameworks above, this thesis investigates how a double deployment of power governs immigrant and queer subjects, and argues that the recurrent cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in the Stephanides family demonstrates the control enforced by authoritarian regimes of normativity upon othered bodies, with the aim of exploring the limitations of such power as well as the possibilities of resistance offered in the novel. Before the discussion proceeds further, studies related to *Middlesex* need to be traced for a more comprehensive understanding toward the main concerns of current scholarship in the field.

Literature Review

Previous researches on *Middlesex* have concentrated on three major topics: first, examination of the intersexual body using medical and sociocultural discourses; second, emphasis on transgression and border-crossing as the key themes of the novel; third, analysis

¹ Further references to *The History of Sexuality* by Foucault will be abbreviated to *HS*.

² The topic will be discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

of ethnic and racial issues from biopolitical perspectives. All of these topics constitute an integral aspect addressed in the novel—living with a liminal or even marginal identity and body.

Scientific and sociocultural discourse are two intertwined aspects in reading the bodies and subjectivities in *Middlesex*, Olivia Banner writes, because the application of genetic discoveries in the text serves as an imaginative twist to traditional immigrant narratives that are central to the American experience (845-50). While some studies are more engaged in genetic discourses,³ in “Retrospective Sex,” Rachel Carroll draws on Judith Butler’s assertion in *Gender Trouble* and proposes that *Middlesex* gives voice to the “‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings” who “fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility” (188). Therefore, according to Carroll, it is only through the novel that the individuals can speak for themselves and be heard. In a similar vein, Sarah Graham follows Butler’s interpretation of the “unthinkable, abject, unlivable” body in *Bodies that Matter* and understands the body of the narrator Cal/Calliope as one that inhabits “the excluded and illegible domain that haunts the [intelligible] domain” (16). Graham further analyzes Cal’s intersexual body and states that while his body is considered repulsive and abjected, its ambiguous otherness is also indispensable to the consolidation of the intelligible body (16). This Othering process takes gender normalization as its reference point, but sociocultural control of individuals also involves the marginalization and exclusion of deviant bodies characterized by class and ethnic differences. Sharon E. Preves analyzes sociocultural responses to intersexuality and observes, in a Butlerian fashion, that intersexual bodies are “quite literally queer or ‘culturally unintelligible,’” for they threaten the binary sex/gender paradigm of the homophobic, xenophobic culture and therefore cannot escape pathologization (523-24). Such acts of rendering bodies abnormal, or “enfreakment,” as a means of taming the

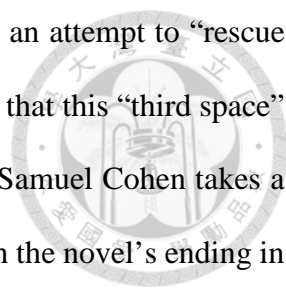
³ Please see Sharon E. Preves (2002), Catherine Harper (2007), Angelika Tsaros (2010), and Viola Amato (2016) for more genetics-related analyses of the novel.

Other is the object of analysis in Graham's article "'See Synonyms at MONSTER': En-Freaking Transgender in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*." Detecting the novel's intention to tame its uneasiness "about sexual ambiguity by associating such hybridity with monstrosity and freakery," she argues that regardless of its seeming celebration of multiplicity, the novel is complicitous with an exploitative social strategy of distorting the intersexual body into a "synonym for monster" (2). Hence, Graham concludes that Cal's status as a freak is established to help "confirm the viewer/reader's own sense of normalcy" (17). But the analysis here indicates that Graham not only fails to embrace sexual and gender diversity,⁴ but is unaware of the diversity of viewer/reader identities. Moreover, in privileging Cal's sexual ambiguity over his other freakishness, she risks fetishizing the freak, or in Sara Ahmed's terms, "stranger fetishization," through which the stranger is stripped of all sociohistorical relations and is replaced by his "figure" as the fetishistic object (5).

In addition to focusing on Cal's ambiguous, intersexual body, the second concern in *Middlesex* scholarship focuses on problems of transgression and border-crossing. To begin with, various forms of transgression and border-crossing have long occupied the center of analytical attention regarding *Middlesex*. The multiple crossing-overs in the novel—sexual, racial, ethnic, and national—received almost unanimous consent from scholars concerning the failure to subvert normative discourses.⁵ Trendel points out that using "the middle" as a metaphor is dubious in *Middlesex*, in which the middle ground signaled in both the title and at the ending of the novel fails to call forth a space of transgressive hybridity, but represents a return to normativity that promises a "middle rooted cosmopolitan way" (3). Similarly, although Debra Shostak perceives the various metaphors of "the middle" that Eugenides deals

⁴ Please see articles by Tracy Hargreaves (2005) and Zachary Sifuentes (2006) for critiques on Graham's perspective.

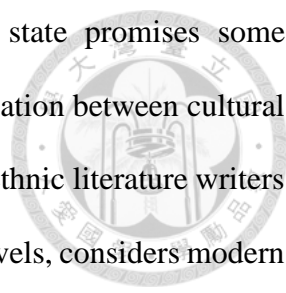
⁵ Please refer to Judith Roof (1996), Hargreaves (2005), Graham (2009), Carroll's "Retrospective Sex" (2009) and *Rereading Heterosexuality* (2012), Banner (2010), Aristi Trendel (2011), and Stephanie Hsu (2011).



with in the text as pushing beyond boundaries of imaginable figures in an attempt to “rescue the hermaphrodite from the position of the strange” (391), she contends that this “third space” is merely a Utopian fantasy (386-87). In treating this middle territory, Samuel Cohen takes a more critical turn and sees it as an open wound completely abandoned in the novel’s ending in favor of a “healing closure,” revealing an America traumatized by the events of 9/11 (376). A stance in contrast to the above studies is the optimism presented by Francisco Collado-Rodriguez. For him, the hybridity of the hermaphrodite as well as Cal’s racial and national ambivalence challenge categorical identity while opening up “a borderland or ‘third space’ where mixed races and intersex identities can coexist” (6). Transgressive or not, this much disputed space of theoretical concerns adds to the debate between social constructivism and biological essentialism.⁶ Black, in her critical work *Fiction Across Borders*, finds in the novel both a textual middle ground that produces its “crowded style,” an “ethics of border crossing” that engages with, instead of invading, imaginations of alterity, as well as a middle ground of the multiple and even contradictory identities of the “crowded self” generated by Cal’s “middlesex” (14, 137). Arguing against Kenneth Womack and Amy Mallory-Kani’s adaptationist reading which approaches the literature as a reflection of human behavior and experiences, Black shifts emphasis away from the biological factors to interpret the textual and identity middle grounds as demonstrating the constant pull between essentialism and post-structuralism.

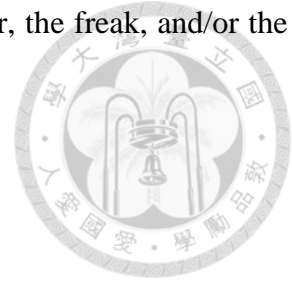
Aside from topics regarding the intersexual body and border-crossing identities, the third topic inspects ethnic and racial issues alongside biopolitical concepts. Scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler (1995), Rey Chow (2002), and Patricia E. Chu (2013) have argued that Foucauldian biopolitics is possibly the most adequate theory in investigating racial citizenship

⁶ On the debate, please see Banner (2010), Shameem Black (2010), Hsu (2011), Carroll (2012), and Oren Gozlan (2014).



in contemporary governmentality, since it scrutinizes the way the state promises some populations access to life while denying it to others, and exposes the relation between cultural production and biological reproduction that often goes unexamined by ethnic literature writers and critics. Chu, in her biopolitical analysis of American ethno-racial novels, considers modern power as that which categorizes and biologizes human existence. She further maintains that ethnic novels have been biopolitical in the sense that they assist in the conceptualization and construction of ethnic identity and political solidarity, as well as the exploration of the subjective development of marginalized ethnic individuals. Informed by this association of ethnic novels with literary biopolitics, Chu detects in Eugenides's *Middlesex* a turning away from traditional ethnic literature paradigm: instead of endorsing an essentialist cultural or historical identity, the novel presents a white immigrant character who no longer gains narrative voice from ethnicity, but from its intersexual body empowered by new genomics. Stephanie Hsu is also concerned with the relation between ethnicity and biopolitics in *Middlesex*. She illustrates how social differences and immigrant assimilation in the text can be traced back to the non-reproductive, intersexual body of Cal, and points to ethnicity's "biometric function" that serves to mediate biopower onto the multiple border-crossing body (89). In other words, ethnicity's newly developed "biopolitical capacity" has now surpassed race and sexuality as the most powerful determinant of subjectivity. Besides Chu's and Hsu's discussions which focus mainly on Cal/Calliope's intersexual body, literature on the biopolitical reading of *Middlesex* has been scarce. Few scholars writing on the novel have given exclusive attention to instances of authoritative interventions or exclusions, or to biopower's management that extends beyond the human body to include aspects of gender, sexuality, and death—although these forms of control are increasingly being incorporated into the mechanisms of modern state power and embodied by the characters who must juggle multiple minority identities, living simultaneously as the massacre survivor, the refugee, the Greek-

American, the racialized, the incestuous, the hermaphrodite sex worker, the freak, and/or the queer.



Methodology

With human life as its central object, biopower supervises the capital and ideological productivity of a population (Edelman 176), operating by “making live” to ensure future prosperity while exerting its power to “let die” over potential risks that may threaten social security, and in the case of the novel, gender and sexuality normativity. The array of multilayered identities in *Middlesex* merits a closer look into how populations are stratified, how they are managed so they can be put to their best possible use and, when they fail to comply, how they are conveniently neglected or even sentenced to social death. To examine these issues, the main approach of this thesis is Foucauldian in orientation, coupled with Agamben’s theorization of bare life for a more comprehensive discussion.

In Foucault’s analysis, biopolitics is a modern form of power that puts life at the center stage. Aimed at the optimization of life, biopolitics denotes a means of exercising control that shifts from a strategy of “deduction,” or deprivation, implemented by traditional sovereign power, to one that works “to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it” (HS 136). This transformation, according to Foucault, marks a historical rupture with the sovereign past: biopolitical governmentality expresses not the will of the monarch, but is designed to discipline the human body as well as to regulate the social body in order to maximize economic productivity, to maintain political subjugation, and above all, to achieve a state of internal equilibrium through risk control measures. And it is for the sake of life and security that modern racism exercises “the death-function in the economy of biopower,”

using biological rhetoric to justify state-sanctioned killing (*Society Must Be Defended* 258).⁷ In contrast to the injunction to make live, the demand to neglect or to kill some members of society for the well-being of the entire population constitutes the flipside of biopolitics—the politics of death, often referred to as “thanatopolitics” or “necropolitics.”

Although Foucault’s writings on biopolitics are scattered across years of his works and therefore lacks a consistent theoretical structure, his concept has inspired much scholarly responses that reexamine and analyze the relation between life and politics.⁸ A critical appropriation of the Foucauldian idea is found in Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*. In this meditation on sovereignty and its subjects, Agamben diverges from the historical caesura Foucault has observed by reestablishing the connection between biopolitics and sovereignty, maintaining that sovereign power is in itself biopolitical: “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (6). According to Agamben, life comes in two forms: *zoe*, meaning biological existence, which is the simple fact of living, and *bíos*, indicating political life or life as a citizen. Only when a person is acknowledged legal status can he become a proper member of society; otherwise, he is reduced to the mere physical existence of the *homo sacer* that can be killed with impunity but not sacrificed. Taken into a double exception, the *homo sacer* is included in the juridical order solely through his exclusion from both the human law and the divine law. As Agamben explains, the *homo sacer* “belongs to God in the form of unsacrificeability and is included in the community in the form of being able to be killed” (82). Unpunishable and unsacrificeable, the figure of the *homo sacer* constitutes a bare life which is “not simply natural reproductive life, the *zoe* of the Greeks, nor *bíos*, a qualified form of life,”

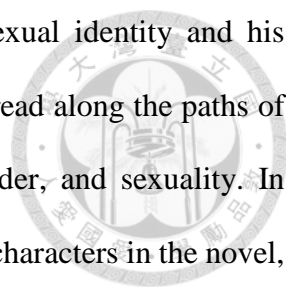
⁷ Further references to *Society Must Be Defended* will be abbreviated to *SMBD*.

⁸ In addition to Agamben (*Means without End* 1996; *Homo Sacer* 1998), other scholars contributing to the large body of knowledge on biopolitics following Foucault have refined and advanced the concept across various dimensions, including Anthony Giddens (*Modernity and Self-Identity* 1991), Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller (*Biopolitics* 1994), Didier Fassin (“The Biopolitics of Otherness” 2001), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (*Empire* 2000, *Multitude* 2004), Roberto Esposito (*Bíos* 2008), Judith Butler (*Precarious Life* 2006; *Frames of War* 2009), as well as Butler and Athena Athanasiou (*Dispossession* 2013).

but an existence in “a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast, nature and culture” (109; emphasis in original). For Agamben, the logic of inclusion and exclusion that takes life as its object provides the foundation of Western politics, underlying Roman laws, Nazi concentration camps, and contemporary institutions of refugee camps and asylums. Therefore, in Agamben’s articulation, the biopower inherent to civilized society in the modern era does not signal a new form of political rationality as Foucault argues; it is instead a “generalization and radicalization” of an ancient practice of power that exposes its subjects to violence (Lemke 53).

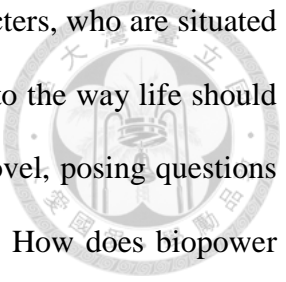
With biopolitics being a prominent field of academic inquiry, its interplay with gender appears to be a relatively new branch of study that is yet to be fully articulated beyond Foucault’s texts. Upon completion of this thesis, *The Biopolitics of Gender* (2016) by Jemima Repo is possibly the only work that examines the techniques of biopower in order to trace a genealogy of gender from its emergence in the 1950s and 1960s to the neoliberal present. In addition to rereading lectures in which Foucault developed an analysis of biopolitics (*SMBD*; *Security, Territory, Population* 2007; *The Birth of Biopolitics* 2008), Repo draws heavily on *Will to Knowledge*, the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, to study how sexuality became a biopolitical apparatus, and to enable a critique of the current form of biopower that utilizes gender as an instrument. The book begins with the birth of gender in the 1950s as a new apparatus, and concludes with the way this biopolitical genealogy of gender challenges feminist politics, calling into question the liberal connotation that gender possesses by inspecting the role biopower plays in the alteration of deployment target from sexuality to gender, and asking how gender has come to take the domination over life and the living body as its objective.

Examining the mechanisms that seek to maximize and optimize the overall utility of a population through a biopolitical control of life, this research will mainly draw on Foucault and Agamben to analyze Eugenides’ *Middlesex*. From descriptions of the inter-national/intersexual



body and sex reassignment surgeries to Cal's ambiguous national/sexual identity and his frequent invocation of genetic terms in the narrative, the novel can be read along the paths of Foucauldian discussions on the biopolitical intersections of sex, gender, and sexuality. In addition to Cal's in-betweenness, this liminality is also cast upon other characters in the novel, who can be refugees, immigrants, sex workers, sexual deviants, or criminals. They are those people standing on the slippery edge of a politics aiming for optimal life; they are the population living in a wasteland where a deeply-rooted American dream drives their urge for physical and financial wellbeing, yet also where dying socially or biologically has become far too common to be worth noticing. This death is the paradoxical effect of biopower, a "letting die" or even a "making die" that, in Eugenides's novel, is embodied by warfare, diaspora, displacement, disability, and casualty. Adopting Foucauldian biopolitics and Agamben's concepts of the *homo sacer* and thanatopolitics as primary approaches toward *Middlesex*, this research hopes to unravel the complexity of modern power through examining how multiple technologies and techniques of power interact to frame the life and death of certain individuals within the novel's biopolitical context.

This research is organized into three chapters, with the first chapter presenting a theoretical analysis on politics of life and death, whereas the remaining chapters offer a biopolitical inquiry into queer and racialized populations. Delving into the biopower over life, this research begins with a chapter that examines biopolitical concepts in writings ranging from Foucault's "Birth of Social Medicine," *History of Sexuality*, and *Society Must Be Defended*, Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, to the article in which Membe identifies a "necropolitics" of death, and *The Biopolitics of Gender* by Repo, to elaborate on the connections not only between biopolitics and the politics of death, but also between this double-sided power and the subjects under control, while taking into consideration whether these discourses compromise or accentuate each other to lay the groundwork for upcoming discussions. Chapter two examines



aspects of the lives and deaths of immigrant and sexually deviant characters, who are situated outside the norm in *Middlesex*. More specifically, this chapter looks into the way life should be lived by the queers and immigrants governed by biopower in the novel, posing questions such as: How is the life of the Stephanides regulated and disciplined? How does biopower inform the gender and sexual apparatuses that brought Cal to Dr. Luce's clinic and prompted his subsequent running away from home? What conflicts are generated between the exertion of biopower and queers/immigrants? The third chapter focuses on racism, a modern biopolitical construct, with attention to those bodies subject to an exclusionary violence that kills with impunity, namely the foreign and the racialized. This chapter asks: How are individuals rendered as disposable? How does the death, or near death, of some populations augment the wellness of others? How do those labeled as killable conduct their lives within a liminal socio-political space in which they are neither alive nor dead? The concluding chapter will briefly discuss the ending of the novel. What is the significance of Cal's eventual reconciliation with his multiple identities? Is resistance or revolution against biopower and its negative side possible through Eugenides' design of a middle ground? In reading *Middlesex* and exploring these questions, this thesis hopes to contribute to the growing literature on the dynamic relationships of biopolitics, the queer, and the immigrant.

Chapter 1: Exploring the Concept of Biopolitics



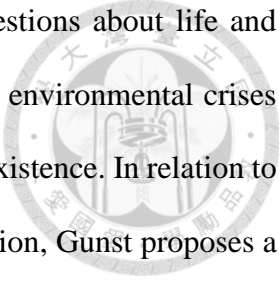
A History of Biopolitics

Before Foucault introduced a relational and historicized analysis of biopolitics, the flow between life and politics had been assumed to be unidirectional—the naturalist finds life at the basis of political action, whereas conversely for the politician, the governance of life itself as an object constitutes the aim of politics (Lemke 3-4). In an integrated examination on the disputed definitions of biopolitics and its gradual systematization in the west into a prolific field of research, Thomas Lemke looks to late-19th century *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) for a rudimentary model of biopolitical thinking. Gaining ground in Germany at the turn of the century, this school of philosophy critiqued the anti-life processes of rationalization and modernization to advocate the reevaluation and re-centering of life. Among its most notable members are Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henri Bergson, who used life as a criterion for the distinction between what should be desired—“the healthy, the good, and the true” that encourages life—and what should be avoided—“the ‘abstract’ concept, ‘cold’ logic, or the soulless ‘spirit’” that suppresses life forces (9). Conceiving human life in terms of both biological existence and “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*), the philosophers revolted against Enlightenment rationalism and mechanistic materialism in favor of intuition, immediacy, as well as spontaneity to restore life back to an authentic and creative state (9). This insistence on life rather than reason, Lemke writes, formulated the discursive core of a politics that emerged in the 20th century.

For Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, who first used the word “biopolitics” to define the similarity he observed between social struggles and the struggle for existence in

nature, the state is a biological entity, a “super-individual creature[s]” that establishes and rules over itself (qtd. in Lemke 9). Therefore, in his organic theory of the state as a living being asserting “ethnic individuality,” the natural outcome of political development is the nation-state (qtd. in Lemke 10). In the view of Kjellén and many of his contemporary scholars, the state is not so much a democratic construct subjected to the collective will of its people as the source and the receiver of its organic powers, providing foundations for laws, norms, and institutions to guarantee its survival, while strengthening its health through natural selection. When the state comes to be perceived as an original form of life that holds absolute supremacy over its subjects, and when social phenomena are explained in conjunction with biological analogy, it is inevitable that organicist ideology, with its Social Darwinist implications and dependence on biological laws, will become the stepping stone to racism (10).

Although the notion of a genetically pure population may have outlived Nazism and survived World War II, by the second half of the 20th century, the heyday of racist biopolitics had long past. Eugenic measures were removed from the center of scientific research, nor could biopolitology, the study that attributes political behaviors to biological factors, garner substantial attention outside the United States (15-21). In the early 70s, biopolitical theories diverged from naturalism to embrace a politicist mindset: the foundation of sociopolitical systems was no longer built on an overarching natural law; instead, this new politics attempted to exert power over natural life through placing biological processes under examination (23). After the exhaustion of two world wars, humankind was faced with a depleted Earth rife with pollutions, contaminations, diseases, and environmental disasters. It was in this atmosphere that ecocentric biopolitics advocated measures aimed at the preservation and conservation of nature. From the introduction of Earth Day, the founding of Greenpeace, to the formation of anti-nuclear groups that remain active thus far, environmental concerns have continued to mobilize mass social movements worldwide. As German political scientist Dietrich Gunst

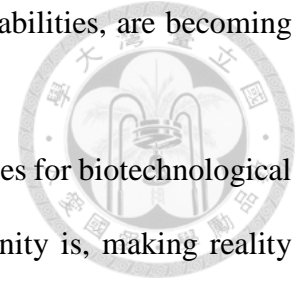


observes, this new form of biopolitical approach now focuses on “questions about life and survival” (qtd. in Lemke 24) by promoting policies directed at curbing environmental crises and ameliorating sociopolitical problems that would jeopardize human existence. In relation to global issues such as overpopulation, food shortage, and resource depletion, Gunst proposes a “life-oriented politics” (qtd. in Lemke 24) with an ecological awareness which informs the economic and political fabric of society. However, Lemke points out, subsequent to the demand for an “ecological world order” was another surge of eugenics and racism in Germany (24). Right-wing activists held “two undesirable biopolitical trends” culpable for the “sullyng of the gene pool”—overpopulation and the “mixing together of all races and genealogical lines”—stating that biopolitics, being the tendency of future politics, must ensure the genetic quality and purity of the human race (qtd. in Lemke 25).

In addition to an ecological focus that preserves biodiversity and natural equilibrium for future generations, the 70s also saw the emergence of technocentric biopolitics. During the decade, biotechnology made several discoveries, announcing the application of horizontal gene transfer (the movement of genetic materials across species), prenatal diagnosis, and most notably among other advances in reproductive technologies, in-vitro fertilization which gave birth to the first test-tube baby. As a response to the quantum leap in biotechnological research, technocentric biopolitics functions by regulating and monitoring scientific practices in order to guarantee bioethical principles have been enforced. When technological and scientific development compromised the presumed stable boundary between nature and culture, as Lemke puts it, the discipline “intensified political and legal efforts to reestablish that boundary” (26). Lemke then draws from the interpretation of German sociologist Wolfgang van den Daele to further explain the problem of the fragile border:

Biopolitics responds to the transgression of boundaries. It reacts to the fact that the boundary conditions of human life, which until now were unquestioned

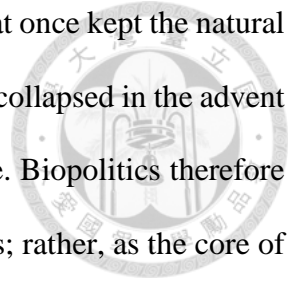
because they lay beyond the reach of our technical capabilities, are becoming accessible to us. (qtd. in Lemke 27)



While ethical and moral constraints may be the most formidable obstacles for biotechnological innovations, those standards also serve as a reminder for what humanity is, making reality checks to ensure that no research is out of line and constantly asking, “Just because we can, should we?” (Van den Daele, qtd. in Lemke 27). Contrary to the naturalist position eventually occupied by eco-centric biopolitics with its appeal for the implementation of new policies that cater to environmental changes, the technocentric version roots firmly for a development-oriented politics that adapts the natural world to meet human needs and desires.

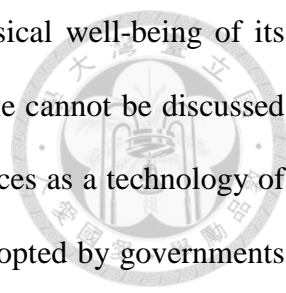
Regarding a more comprehensive definition of biopolitics that incorporates both naturalism and politicism, Lemke follows philosopher Volker Gerhardt in understanding the field as a set of actions targeted at the security, reinforcement, and protection of the human species (29). In this sense, the individual has become an “object of the life sciences” (Gerhardt, qtd. in Lemke 29), to the extent that every personal choice must serve the interests of biopower and that freedom turns out to be conditional upon its compliance with such power. The objective of these actions is the promotion of life, yet when the right to life and biotechnological interventions begin to override the individual, the question of biopolitical legitimacy emerges. Who decides on the policy that rules over life? Who has the authority to privilege one life as more worth living than the other? How is life assessed, and by whom? For Lemke, the question of “we” the political subject unveils the fundamental indistinction between life and political discourses that neither naturalists nor politicists acknowledged. Whereas previous intellectuals held on to a clear-cut, a priori division, it is biopolitics that lays out “the borderland in which the distinction between life and action is *introduced* and dramatized in the first place” (Thomä, qtd. in Lemke 31; emphasis in original). The distinction, which in the classical political world constituted the origin for forms of governance, was revealed by biopolitics not as the root but

as “an effect of political action” (31-32). The presumed stable border that once kept the natural and the biological on one side, and society and politics on the other, has collapsed in the advent of scientific breakthroughs and new technologies seeking to modify life. Biopolitics therefore by no means operates solely on the basis of life or serves life’s purposes; rather, as the core of this political practice, life is simultaneously the subject and the object of control.



A Foucauldian Investigation

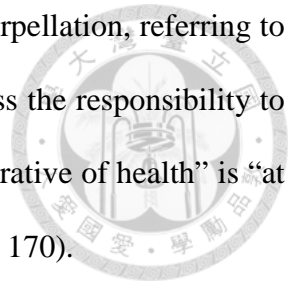
Although Lemke assigns the origin of a biopolitical model to a philosophy of life that formed around the late 19th-century, Foucault and Agamben have argued an earlier date. In the years between 1973 and 1975, Foucault develops a multifaceted interest in the medicalization of society. He investigates the genealogy of psychiatry in two lecture series he gives at the Collège de France (*Abnormal; Psychiatric Power*), and later in his 1974 lecture “The Birth of Social Medicine,” he traces the historical evolution of a society that has begun to organize itself into a medical framework since the end of the 18th century. Although at the time of the lecture Foucault has yet to advance his theorization of the term “biopolitics,” he emphasizes the biopolitical correlation between capitalist society and its socialization of body as labor force, stating that its “control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body” (“Birth of Social Medicine” 137). To probe into this growing concern with the corporeal and the subsequent expansion of medical and sanitary systems, Foucault points to three fields of study: first, a biohistory centering upon the interplay between biosphere and the development of human civilization; second, the “network of medicalization” through which society exercises a tightening grip on the biological, physical, and mental dimensions of its human subjects; third, the economy of health that proposes a



positive relation between the nation's financial prowess and the physical well-being of its people (135). All three aspects underline the fact that modern medicine cannot be discussed without considering the rationale behind its inclusion into social practices as a technology of managing the human body. Despite variations in medical strategies adopted by governments over time, Majia Nadesan observes in Foucault's argument that "they tend to cohere around security problematics posed to, and by, the vitality, fecundity, and productivity of the population" (93). As Foucault explains in "The Birth of Social Medicine," medico-scientific management of the people prevailed solely as a guarantee of national security until the late 19th century at the height of modern capitalism, when extracting maximum labor power became the primary agenda for the state to achieve political and economic success: "For capitalist society, it was biopolitics, the biological, the somatic, the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. The body is a biopolitical reality; medicine is a biopolitical strategy" (137).

Foucault's work on the formation of social medicine takes 19th-century Germany, France, and England as models for analysis, presenting a three-step process that moves from the systematization and monitoring of somatic health, the implementation of public hygiene, to the institution of welfare medicine for the poor. Foucault traces the first instance of the concept "science of the state" (*Staatswissenschaft*) to Germany (137), where since the 17th century knowledge about natural resources possessed by the country as well as the living conditions of its populations has been studied to enact more effective modes of governance. Following the mercantilist mindset that predominates 18th-century Germany and coupling national wealth and power with population productivity, state medicine is developed and exerted by the "medical police." This newly founded authoritarian system is targeted at standardizing medical protocols, subjugating medical practitioners to administrative supervision, and incorporating those professionals into the organization of the state through appointing them as medical officers. While state medicine mainly operates from above,

Nadesan notes that power apparatuses function also via ideological interpellation, referring to the multiplication of literature aimed at instilling into the educated class the responsibility to stay physically healthy during the era. In Foucault's words, such "imperative of health" is "at once the duty of each and the objective of all" ("The Politics of Health" 170).



The second stage of social medicalization was urban medicine. Large city in France in the late-18th and 19th centuries was "a jumbled multitude of heterogeneous territories and rival powers" in urgent need of a unified authority consistent in regulating the rapidly expanding economic activities within the city and forceful enough to suppress revolts led by the proletarian underclass ("Birth of Social Medicine" 142-43). The lack of a coherent metropolitan vision exacerbated the social consequences of industrialization and urbanization—from overcrowding, pollution, diseases, squalor, visible poverty, immorality, to crime—all those downsides of civilization wound up in feelings of fear and anxiety induced by the city. As Foucault describes, it was

an urban fear, a fear of the city, a very characteristic uneasiness: a fear of the workshops and factories being constructed, the crowding together of the population, the excessive height of the buildings, the urban epidemics, the rumors that invaded the city; a fear of the sinks and pits on which were constructed houses that threatened to collapse at any moment. (144)

Amidst the chaos and the panic that reflected a "politico-sanitary anxiety" produced by the urban machine (144), the idea of public hygiene appeared. The main objectives of urban medicine included analyzing city spaces, especially those "zones of congestion, disorder, and danger" deemed responsible for disease outbreaks (147); organizing and controlling the circulation of air and water; and the redistribution and sanitary surveillance of city spaces. Here instead of the attempt to heal or strengthen the human body, this medical practice provided "a medicine of things" intended to remedy the city (150). Under the public health apparatus,

administration over the salubrity and insalubrity of urban environments must be enforced for the city, or even the entire nation, to attain economic and political stability.

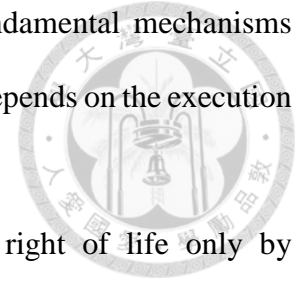
The last phase of social medicine, labor force medicine, takes English Poor Law as example. A tax-supported and state-funded welfare program, the law was established in the 19th century to guarantee the health and wealth of the upper-class through providing medical treatment for the destitute. This medical legislation, which created “an officially sanctioned sanitary cordon between the rich and the poor” (153), declared the inauguration of an intricate system of control that extended well into the 1870s, when John Simon set up the Health Service and the Offices for the “protection of the entire population without distinction” (154). The institutions claimed to offer “nonindividualized care” directed toward every social class, and concerned the environmental sanitation and living conditions of city inhabitants (154), sharing similar strategies with the Poor Law as well as the aforementioned French urban medicine. But again, just like its predecessors, the underlying logic of English social medicine was far from philanthropic; rather, it was a medical control operating at the collective level upon the bodies of underprivileged groups “to make them more fit for labor and less dangerous to the wealthy classes” (155). To achieve these ends in a nation characterized by class antagonisms, three medical systems were designed to correspond to different social ranks: a medical welfare for the underclass; an administrative medicine that ensured the health and safety of the general public; and for those higher up the social pyramid, a private medicine providing quality medical care.

It was precisely due to the complex mechanisms involved in balancing between the subjection of the people to compulsory medicalization, and the appeasement thereafter offered in return, that led to Foucault’s conclusion that the English system exceeds German state medicine and French urban medicine in terms of scope, efficiency, and efficacy. This does not suggest that labor force medicine simply replaced the other two dimensions in the evolution of

social medicine, Nadesan remarks, as national security relies heavily on an abundant workforce and productivity growth. But one can tell from this genealogy of social medicine and what Foucault later examined in *Security, Territory, Population* that the medical apparatus bespeaks the governmental technologies of its time and adjusts accordingly, as exemplified by the general shift of its concern from disciplinary problematics to an emphasis on securitization (Nadesan 96-97).

“We need to cut off the King’s head,” Foucault declares, warning about “the great trap we are in danger of falling into” when we analyze sovereign power (*Power/Knowledge* 121; *SMBD* 34). Instead of offering generalized claims about state apparatuses, institutions, and ruling classes, Foucault attempts to avert systematized discourses and directs his analytical focus toward “the techniques and tactics of domination” (*SMBD* 34); in other words, Foucault is discussing the capillary network of power and control mechanisms that have seeped into the lives of unsuspecting political subjects. The great trap that we must proceed with caution, that Foucault censures, is the juridico-political theory of sovereignty which can be dated back to Medieval Roman law and its later reactivation in the mid-Middles Ages. Centered on mechanisms of royal power, this theory fulfilled a quadruple function: it pointed to a specific power structure that founded the feudal monarchy; it served as the principle facilitating the establishment and legitimacy of sovereignty; it has also been deployed as a weapon to either curb or consolidate the aristocracy in social struggles by both sides since the 16th and 17th centuries, especially during the Wars of Religion; and finally, it took on a different role in the 18th-century call for a turning away from authoritarian absolute regimes and presented an alternative model that embraced parliamentary democracies (*SMBD* 35). This theory, while being “the theory we have to get away from if we want to analyze power,” is necessary for it is “coextensive with the general mechanics of power,” as Foucault emphasizes, it characterizes not only traditional sovereign practices but also any feudal-type social structure based on a

sovereign/subject relationship (35). It therefore demonstrates the fundamental mechanisms through which power operates, and is pertinent to any social body that depends on the execution of stratified, top-down forms of power.



As Foucault clearly explains, “the sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring” (*HS* 136). Sovereignty had as its symbol the sword that guards its holder from harms by exposing others to death with the “right to *take* life or *let* live” (136, emphasis in original); but it was also a power of extraction (*prélèvement*), Foucault adds, a means of appropriation through which the monarch gained authority over the wealth, goods, time, labor, and ultimately, the life of its people. Sovereignty was most powerfully founded upon the absolute authority over life and death, yet from the 18th century onward with the rise of classical political philosophy, the right derived from Roman *patria potestas* (paternal power) declined, so that the sovereign was to exert the power only to protect himself from external threats. It seemed, on the one hand, that the unconditional right to kill had been diminished, but on the other hand, this enabled the sovereign to legitimately wage wars against his enemies or to directly execute rebels in the name of defending the state. Consequently, although sovereign right was restricted, the monarch nevertheless possessed an “indirect” power over the life and death of his subjects by jeopardizing their life without “directly proposing their death” (*HS* 135). In this sense, the significance given to life and to death appears asymmetrical and paradoxical.

According to Foucault, sovereign power represented essentially the right to seizure, for it concerned not the bodies nor the lives of its subjects, but the economic and political competence of its territory. The theory of sovereignty was, in Foucault’s word, “a theory which can found absolute power on the absolute expenditure of power, but which cannot calculate power with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency” (*SMBD* 36). Rather than the

inevitable displacement and appropriation of time and labor involved in the production of commodities, sovereignty put exclusive emphasis on material and monetary acquisitions, coercing its people into an arbitrary and unidimensional domination through force. Sovereignty proved itself capable of justifying the physical existence of monarchy, yet it failed to constitute coherent and consistent systems of surveillance. Where sovereignty reached the limit of its control, a new type of power arose.

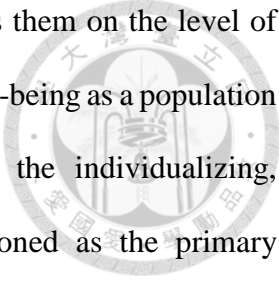
In the 1975-1976 lecture series entitled *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault further elaborated on the inadequacies of the theory of sovereignty, and introduced a new model of power—disciplinary power. This novel form of non-sovereign power emerged around the 17th century during the bourgeois era. Foucault found the earliest instances of this kind of power within Christian monasteries, where the allocation of space for segregation and surveillance, everyday examinations of conscience, and the rigid monastic timetable enforced to ensure productivity were all key characteristics of disciplinary power. In the 18th and 19th centuries, this power expanded, reaching into five major social institutions: the school, the army, the hospital, the factory, and the prison (Tammelleo 240). Following the expansion, it served as a legal instrument that conduced to the success of industrial capitalism while penetrating into the corresponding social body for more comprehensive control and monitoring. Disciplinary power presupposed a mechanism incompatible with its sovereign predecessor, focusing primarily on achieving “minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency” within a material matrix of coercion and constraint aimed at the individual body (*SMBD* 36). The new mechanism of power enabled the further extraction of time and labor from bodies by adopting a thorough surveillance of the subjects and aiming for “an increase both in the subjugated forces and in the force and efficacy of that which subjugated them” (35-36). In other words, unlike the theory of sovereignty that revolved around the physical well-being of its ruler, disciplinary

power was based upon utilitarian principles and took as its objective the extortion and perpetuation of labor forces.

Under the control of this individualizing power, bodies were treated as machines that required a set of intricate procedures to optimize their performance, maximize their utility, standardize and homogenize their experiences as a way of conforming them to norms of behavior, and finally, to render them docile and manipulable. All these were effected through practices Foucault identified as “*disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body*” aimed at training individuals into subjects of society (HS 139; emphasis in original).

The forms of discipline which were mostly implemented through institutions—including the school, the army, the hospital, the factory, and the prison—started to penetrate the entire social organism at the turn of the 19th century. According to Foucault, near the end of the 18th century, power over life evolved into a bipolar technology that, on the one hand, managed individual subjects in accordance with an anatomical model, and on the other hand, governed the population based on biological processes. The latter technique did not assume a mechanical body but exploited the “species body” by manipulating those processes of life pertaining to conditions of “propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” through “an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*” (HS 139; emphasis in original). Regulatory mechanisms were organized and developed within this framework, which treated individuals as mere biological examples to facilitate a comprehensive management over the population at the level of species.

What Foucault terms “biopolitics” is a non-disciplinary power “applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being . . . to man-as-species” (SMBD 242). In contrast to the disciplinary, anatomo-politics that focuses on infiltrating a multiplicity of men “to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies” for surveillance, drilling, employment, and punishment, biopower is a regulatory mechanism that



approaches bodies not in terms of their specificity, but instead operates them on the level of generality, perceiving them as a “global mass” whose life, death, and well-being as a population determine the prosperity and security of the nation (242). While the individualizing, disciplinary power established in the 18th century no longer functioned as the primary governmental technique with the emergence of the regularizing, massifying logic, nevertheless, as Lemke suggests, “‘individual’ and ‘mass’ are not extremes but rather two sides of a global political technology” that exercises infinite control over both the individual body and the social body (38). In other words, biopolitics did not replace disciplinary power; instead, starting in the 19th century, individualizing means that prevailed as the major technology defining power over life was complemented by a new strand of politics which is centered upon life, upon the entire human race.

In this light, the lives of subjects are administered by two parallel series of measure: “the body-organism-discipline-institutions series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State” (*SMBD* 250). The task of the latter system to predict, identify, and ameliorate risks that may occur in a population characterizes one of the objective of Foucault’s bipolar technology, which is “to establish a sort of homeostasis . . . by achieving an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers” (249). Organized around the micro-processes that rectify corporeal behaviors through institutions and the macro-mechanisms that employ control over biological processes and operate at the state level, this power over life, in the course of history has increased the scope and variety of political interventions. In contrast to the sovereignty that reigned with a sword, modern politics features a power fixated on life, a biopower “whose highest function was perhaps no longer to

kill, but to invest life through and through” (HS 139). But how did life become the center of political discourse? How was it integrated into mechanisms of control?⁹

Following mercantilist principles that flourished for two and a half centuries, capitalism arose in the 18th century, demanding a change in strategies of control and calling for a more intricate type of power that not only guards or “polices” life, but fosters and enhances it to boost fertility and productivity rates. The capitalist need for an upward-sloping labor supply led to “the entry of life into history,” or more specifically, “the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques” (HS 141-42). In addition, with technological and medico-scientific innovations targeting the prolongation of life and lowering the risk of death, systems of power and knowledge were increasingly justified in their supervision and intervention over life processes, as Foucault assures, “[f]or the first time in history . . . biological existence was reflected in political existence” (142). When life became a constant possibility and when the randomness of death could be minimized, power began to gain access to the living body. From then on, “[w]estern man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world” (142), pointing to a transformation in the nature of governance characterized by a growing concern with political existence, with biological life, and with forces that dominate conditions of living and dying.

⁹ In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault provides another theorization of biopolitics. He defines biopower as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power” (16). Aimed at the 17th-century development of “the state of (military-economic) competition” and “the *Wohlfahrt* state (of wealth-tranquility-happiness),” it was a power fundamentally concerned with “the management of state forces” (474). To improve the nation’s economic and military competence, police system was built with a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, patrolling target areas and inflicting punishments for social security; on the other hand, “reducing the infant mortality rate, preventing epidemics and lowering the rates of endemic diseases, intervening to modify and impose norms on living conditions (whether in the matter of diet, housing, or town planning), and adequate medical facilities” based on a health policy shaped by the composition of its population (474). This “management of state forces” through the formation of a national medical police, according to Foucault, marks the earliest instance of biopower.

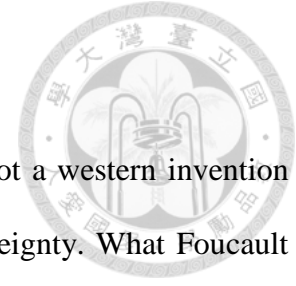
Such transformation signals the moment in which a society reaches its “threshold of modernity,” Foucault declares, in response to Aristotle’s political naturalism:

what might be called a society’s “threshold of modernity” has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (*HS* 143)

In Aristotle’s polis, animality is a presupposed condition of human beings, and political existence is only an “additional capacity” that seeks to transcend animality; whereas in modern politics, this animality, or the biological life of man, has become the primary aim of control. While Foucault follows Aristotle’s theory in identifying modern man as a *zoon politikon*, he also proposes a “biological redefinition of political subjectivity” (Palladino 115), emphasizing the shift from the discursive, deprivative control of sovereignty to a focus on the anatomical facts of the living human body.

What the “additional capacity” of man places “in question” is the biological life of the human species. As modern politics takes to nurture life, the deductive power of sovereignty also begins to “align itself with the exigencies of a life-administering power and to define itself accordingly,” presenting itself as “simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life” (*HS* 136). Death thus becomes the counterpart of a pro-life political system, and with that all the negative connotations it carried back in sovereign times are dispelled by a biopower “bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them” (136). Under biopolitical regimes, death functions not as a force that deducts or deprives, but is incorporated into an entire mechanism dedicated to the management of biological life.

Giorgio Agamben's Meditation



In Agamben's deployment of biopolitics, power over life is not a western invention developed several centuries ago, but an underlying structure of sovereignty. What Foucault defined as the historical caesura that marked the turn from classical to modern politics is simply an extreme extension of sovereign power. For Agamben, analyses of traditional juridico-institutional power and biopower

cannot be separated, and that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power. *It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.* In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception. (*Homo Sacer* 6; emphasis in original)

Accordingly, there was never a “birth of biopolitics” as Foucault asserts. From the very beginning of western history, politics has revolved around the figure of bare life. Challenging Foucault's understanding of the Aristotelian man who has an “additional capacity” for political existence, Agamben renders problematic the clear-cut distinction between biological life and politics, and argues that politics is itself structured around the inclusion and exclusion of life. He draws on Aristotle's definition of the *polis*, “born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life,” to reveal the fundamental opposition implied in the concept “life” (7). The phrase distinguishes between two forms of life—“life” as a natural biological entity, and a politically qualified “good life”—the distinction of which presupposes first of all the inclusion of the former by the latter, yet it also entails an “inclusive exclusion” of biological life before proper life is achieved in the *polis* (7). In Greek, life is consisted of two components: *zoe*, “the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods),” and *bios*,

which designates “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group” (1). From this split between “life” and “good life,” *zoe* and *bios*, Agamben develops the notion of bare life.

The production of bare life, or politicized *zoe*, is the result of a deployment of power over life. As Alex Murray explains, in Agamben’s formulation “politics is always the politicisation of life, the attempt to create ‘forms of life’” (206). Bare life in this sense is life produced when *bios* is stripped of its political quality, and reduced to a liminal existence that is neither *zoe* nor *bios*, but lies external to the two. Drawing from the essay “Critique of Violence” (“*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*”), Agamben follows Walter Benjamin in conceiving bare life as “the bearer of the link between violence and law” (*Homo Sacer* 65), in the sense that it is simultaneously the target of the violent means invoked for law enforcement, and of a law inevitably intertwined with juridical violence. This liminal being is exemplified in Agamben’s work by the figure of the *homo sacer*, who is “the site of a conjunction of a passive capacity (‘can be killed’) with a passive incapacity (‘cannot be sacrificed’)” (95). The *homo sacer* is excluded from legal protection and therefore can be killed with impunity, yet meanwhile his status also suggests an inclusion into the politico-legal order inasmuch as this exclusion is only effective through procedures of law or sacrifice (*sacratio*). It is bare life at the limits of politics and ethics, characterizing an existence outside animality or humanity, and even becoming inhuman in its most extreme form.

According to Agamben, the Nazi camp was a state of exception within which “an unprecedented absolutization of the biopower to *make live* intersects with an equally absolute generalization of the sovereign power to *make die*, such that biopolitics coincides immediately with thanatopolitics” (*Remnants in Auschwitz* 83; emphasis in original). Using “protective custody” and “preventative police measure” as its juridical basis, the camp incarcerated or “[took] into custody” individuals in the name of state security and well-being (*Homo Sacer* 167). The junction at which the antithetical powers to make live and to make die intersect is

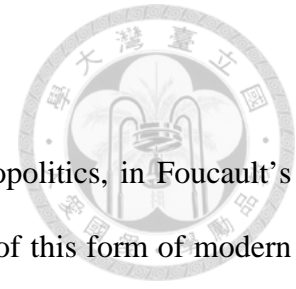
most blatantly revealed through the concentration camp, hence the camp is interpreted controversially by Agamben as the “fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West” (181).

Although in classical times, sovereignty relegated every subject to the status of bare life for the production of “the originary political element” (90), in modernity, human beings are still increasingly living a bare life despite the democratic turn in political strategy. In this light, Agamben observes both a displacement as well as an expansion of sovereign power attempting to reach into the limits of biopower:

If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones. . . . the sovereign is entering into an ever more intimate symbiosis not only with the jurist but also with the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest. (122)

The indistinction between life and death, between making live and making die, instigated the transformation of biopolitics into thanatopolitics. By investigating the juridico-political structure of Nazi camps, Agamben uncovers in those places “the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living” (166). For Agamben, while the ultimate instance of the collapse of biopower into sovereign power may be found in the camp, in modern or contemporary regimes and practices of exception, politics of life is also progressively turning into thanatopolitics.

Biopolitics and the Politics of Death

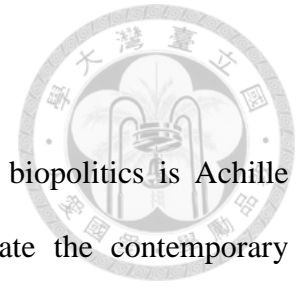


Directed at preserving and optimizing life and population, biopolitics, in Foucault's account, operates paradoxically at the expense of others. The flipside of this form of modern governmentality is the politics of death, a domain unrecognized and unreachable by biopower. For Foucault, death as the end of life delimits the end of the power to make live. And thus, since the rise of biopolitics in the late 18th century amid the crisis of sovereignty, death has been undergoing a "gradual disqualification" (*SMBD* 247), manifested in the decline of public spectacles or ceremonies for the dead. Under sovereign rule, the subject was perpetually cast in a neutral, liminal state: neither dead nor alive under the rights of the sovereign, the subject was the possession of the monarch, who decides his life and death at will, and who almost always favored the right to kill. It was due to this complete domination over the subject that death was ritualized and celebrated as a perpetuation of power: the end of one's life denoted the transition of authority from the sovereign in this world to that in the afterlife, from the deceased to those objects he left behind. Opposed to an absolute power whose potency rested upon the capacity to disallow life, biopower supports life and eradicates death to the extent that, Foucault contends, "Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death" (248), leading to the shift of perception from celebrating the passing of life to privatizing death. However, it does not mean that death is eradicated once and for all; death is the only guarantee of escape from biopower, and therefore it is taboo. But how does biopolitics explain for the direct and indirect deaths that occur as a consequence of its enforcement? How can a power that has life as its object and the management of life as its objective also take life away? In *Society Must Be Defended*, this death-function is attributed to sovereign power, which operates in conjunction with biopower, and is justified by the State in the form of racism. Here Foucault is theorizing a modern conception of racism that establishes a biological relationship between

the death of an inferior race and the life of an entire population that thrives on this murder—including biological deaths, social and political deaths, exposure to death, displacement, etc. Rather than serving the logic of ideologies and building warlike political relationships as in traditional racism, this new form of racism in the modern age complements the workings of biopower, and is, Foucault emphasizes, the precondition for this power to exercise the right to kill in the name of creating a healthier and purer population (254-58).

Drawing from Foucault's notion of death under the reign of biopolitics, which suggests that dying denotes the entrance into a realm where the power to command life is rendered impotent, Agamben maintains that in modernity the line between life and death is obscured. When the state of exception becomes the norm and when a decision on life turns out to be a decision on death, as Agamben finds in Nazi eugenics and the camp, biopolitics collapses into thanatopolitics (*Homo Sacer* 122). Such is the power that now thoroughly penetrates the life and death of its subject, making live but also taking lives in a state both biopolitical and totalitarian. For Agamben, the most extreme and absolute realization of biopower appears in concentration camps, where "people did not die; rather, corpses were produced. Corpses without death, non-humans whose decess is debased into a matter of serial production" (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 71-72). Taken to its paradoxical limit, biopolitics marks not only the end of life but the end of death. In the camps, biopolitics no longer supports a pro-life agenda, but turns into a thanatopolitics that blurs the line between living and dying as sovereignty expands from juridical regimes into biological ones. It is this kind of power, Agamben argues, that turns its modern subjects into bare life, into an undifferentiated, non-individuated biological mass whose existence is suspended and can be nullified at any moment.

Achille Mbembe on Necropolitics



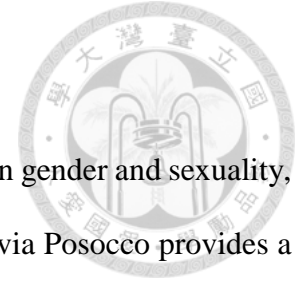
Another study that revisits the negative side of Foucauldian biopolitics is Achille Mbembe's theory of "necropolitics"—a term he coined to designate the contemporary domination of the power of death over life. Expanding on Foucault's biopolitics, Mbembe, in his article entitled "Necropolitics," theorizes the term "necropolitics" and defines it as the "subjugation of life to the power of death" (39). Departing from Agamben's emphasis on the sovereign right to kill and to produce *homines sacri*, which holds the pessimistic notion that all biopolitics will eventually become thanatopolitical, and the Eurocentric discourse focusing mostly on the Nazi Holocaust, Mbembe finds instances of biopolitical extremity outside the camps, inside spaces of plantation systems, colonial slavery, postcolonies, and contemporary wars.

Mbembe's understanding of sovereignty attempts to release the concept from traditional accounts that confine it "within the boundaries of the nation-state, within institutions empowered by the state, or within supranational institutions and networks" (11). He draws on *Society Must Be Defended* and *Homo Sacer* for a critical expansion regarding the relation of sovereignty to war and biopower. Approaching sovereignty as a concept structured upon death, whose "ultimate expression . . . resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (11), Mbembe does not concede with the normative "romance of sovereignty" upheld by late-modern political criticism that privileges a politics exercised with reason onto the autonomous individual (13). The topos of sovereignty is far from the concept of reason, and although it has been defined as a politics built upon autonomy and collective agreement, or processes of "*self-institution* and *self-limitation*," neither does it guarantee the achievement of "good life" (13). For Mbembe, "modernity was at the origin of multiple concepts of sovereignty—and therefore of the biopolitical" (13). In this light, the

foundation of sovereignty is not reason, but the less abstract categories of life and death, as sovereignty in modern times is becoming less and less concerned about the autonomous regulation and discipline of its subjects, and more centralized on protecting the security of its reign, aiming for “*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*” (14; emphasis in original).

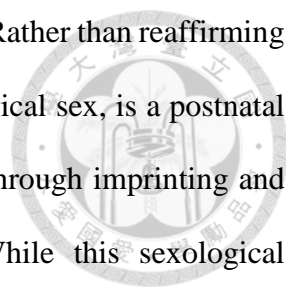
Mbembe argues that, on the global biopolitical terrain, politics kills under the guise of war. Since sovereignty is “expressed predominantly as the right to kill” (16), the exertion of its power, namely the generalized instrumentalization and material destruction of human subjects, involves war or warlike relations exemplified by the late-modern colony where, in a state of exception, “‘peace’ is more likely to take on the face of a ‘war without end’” (23). In the colony and later under the apartheid system, a concatenation of multiple forces—biopower, state of exception, and the state of siege—built a “peculiar terror formation” that employed race as a technology of power (22). In the biopolitical present, Mbembe observes, the state of exception is being superseded by the necropolitical “*state of siege*” that enacts indiscriminate mass killing, taking as its target the entire population (30; emphasis in original). It is in this sense that, having in mind the creation of mass destruction weapons, Mbembe identifies a new form of social existence: the “*living dead*” who struggles to survive a politics of letting die in the “*death-worlds*” created by necropower (40; emphasis in original). In contemporary forms of sovereignty, it is now up to the operations of biopower and necropower to determine whom to make live and whom to let die.

Biopower and the Sex/Gender System



Centering on intersections of death and biopolitical discourses on gender and sexuality, *Queer Necropolitics*, edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco provides a compilation of essays that address these issues. For example, Sima Shakhsari writes on queer representability in the logic of homonationalism, and the rightful killing of certain populations who are not bare life, but who can be killed rightfully only by the liberal states during the war on terror; Aren Z. Aizura brings forth a bio- and necropolitical discussion on film works concerning capitalist instrumentalization of racialized “trans femininity” and its labor value (131); Sarah Lamble theorizes “*queer penalty*” as the newfound role of neoliberal carceral state, in which state violence becomes the guardian of a sexual citizenship who used to be victims of criminalization (163; emphasis in original). Using Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics and Jasbir Puar’s account of queer necropolitics as its starting point, the collection seeks to explore the terrain of queer politics in biopolitical and necropolitical regimes, where deaths occur not just in wars or invasions but are impending in the everyday life of the queer population.

In *The Biopolitics of Gender* by Jemima Repo, the concept of gender is traced genealogically from postwar capitalist western societies to neoliberal governmentalities that arose in the 1980s. For Repo, sexuality as theorized in Foucault was the dominant subject of 19th-century scientific and biopolitical discourses, but from the mid-20th and early 21st-centuries on, gender has begun to operate alongside sexuality as a major apparatus of biopower. The birth of a theory of gender dates back to 1955 in the United States, when psychologist and sexologist John Money presented a study on the significance sexual assignment surgery has on individual processes of familial socialization. Money argued that the ambiguous sexual organs of hermaphroditic children may lead to an adult gender role inconsistent with one’s biological



sex, and thus disintegrating systems of social reproduction and control. Rather than reaffirming gender as an innate attribute, Money claimed that gender, or psychological sex, is a postnatal product. To put another way, the truth of sex is that “it was *learned* through imprinting and *constructed* through surgery” (Repo 47; emphasis in original). While this sexological innovation challenged the sexual apparatus aimed at managing individual sexuality, it by no means subverted the biopolitical rationality of government: in Repo’s words, this idea of gender “drastically transformed, multiplied, and intensified the means of producing sexually different subjects, thus regulating and reproducing social order” (48). As a construct learned during socialization, gender too is incorporated into the sexual apparatus that provides newer and more intricate ways of control.

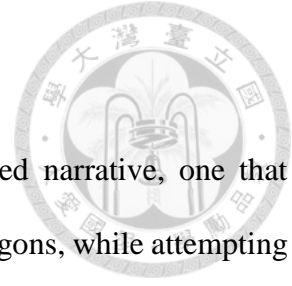
Just as sexuality is the primary technology of biopolitics in Foucault’s works, Repo examines the gender apparatus not by looking into its definition, mechanism, or logic; instead, she maps a genealogy of gender that focuses on the techniques and strategies involved in its operation, and the social effects the apparatus achieved. This genealogy, Repo explains, reveals how gender, constructed by “powerful theories of sex, behavior, psychology, social order, and power, has enabled the perpetual extension of the apparatus of sexuality into new fields of life, at the level of both the subject and society” (5). Through the genealogy, Repo attempts to interrogate how gender is problematized, how it becomes central to a politics bent on disciplining and regulating life, and how it performs those biopolitical functions.

Emerging in the 50s as “a new *apparatus*” regulating life processes (48; emphasis in original), gender discourse for Repo is the key to restoring and reassuring social and sexual order in postwar America. After the Second World War, the urge to reestablish a stable economic and political environment was reflected by the biopolitical need to secure sexual and gender norms. As Repo points out, postwar control over hermaphroditism and ambiguous genitalia bespoke the conservative backlash to, on the one hand, the wartime achievement of

female equality in political and socioeconomic rights, and on the other, the scientific discovery of five variables of biological sex that undermined the unidirectional sex-gender-sexuality association (47). Although policies of gender equality and gender mainstreaming included women as an integral force of postwar reconstruction, these efforts were in fact biopolitical strategies executed for an endless supply of labor and reproductive power. Therefore, the significance of gender lies in its function of reproducing human capital to encourage economic growth; in other words, to reproduce different-sex desiring subjects through processes of socialization in childhood, and ultimately, to regulate processes of life. In a Foucauldian sense, if gender roles fail to adhere to biological reality, “the biopolitical order of things” would be destabilized (37). Money’s sexual assignment surgery is thus a tactic of sexual normalization, the purpose of which is to designate for the child a “normal” genitalia that would allow him to develop a corresponding gender identity. The hermaphroditic subject then becomes “a subject of biopolitical potentiality” (37)—once the problem of sexual ambiguity is solved by surgical interventions, the subject could be psychologically normalized (i.e., become a different-sex desiring subject) and enmeshed into a reproductive whole.



Chapter 2: Looking Through the Queer Body



Middlesex is a family saga told with an intricately constructed narrative, one that entwines a hazy, mythological past with a present heavy in scientific jargons, while attempting to overlay its homogenizing undertones with a seeming autonomy in life choices. The novel appears to account for the unconventional *Bildungsroman* of the intersexual protagonist Cal, who, after going through diasporic experiences and phases of self-discovery, eventually comes to terms with his body, identity, and descent, all of which are the natural outcome destined by the choices he made. However, reading the story from a Foucauldian approach exposes the truth that, ever since the start of the 19th century, governmental strategies directed at the population have been fundamentally biopolitical. A non-disciplinary power targeted at “man-as-living-being,” or to an extreme extent, at “man-as-species” (*SMBD* 242), biopower operates systematically by a complex ensemble of techniques that Foucault terms the “population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State” series (250). This series of technology provides a critical lens for analyzing and shedding light upon the obscure aspects of life lived by Cal and other socially-estranged characters. Argued on a larger scale, the alienation of a certain population by the society and even the nation as a whole has also been similarly mentioned in Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, which suggests an “inclusive exclusion” of bare life that forms the “constitutive outside” of the *polis*. Here, bare life is neither localizable nor literally situated on the edge of the city; rather, it is “fundamentally *interior*” to Western biopolitical governmentality (Vaughan-Williams 147; emphasis in original). An exemplary figure of bare life, the *homo sacer* “exists on a threshold that belongs neither to the world of the living nor to the world of the dead” (*Homo Sacer* 99), but as a living dead man, he is the corporeal embodiment of a biopolitical era built upon the watershed moment of modernity—“the entry of *zoe* into the sphere of the *polis*” (4). That is, when *zoe* (“the simple fact of living”)

is included into the *polis* only as a form of life to be excluded, bare life as a liminal political existence is thereby produced.

This politicization of *zoe* has produced, for Agamben, a list of figures of bare life including the *Flamen Diale*, one of the highest priests of ancient Rome; “the bandit”; “the Führer in the Third Reich”; Paul Rabinow’s case of Wilson, a biochemist who experimented on his own body and life; and Karen Quinlan, who remained in a ten-year persistent vegetative state until her death (*Homo Sacer* 182-86). In his interpretation of the term, David Vilaseca draws from Slavoj Žižek to extend the list of bare life and incorporate other beings such as terrorists, the Rwandans, Bosnians, and Afghans who receive humanitarian aids, the *Sans Papiers* in France, those living in favelas in Brazil, as well as African American ghettos in the U.S. (180). Expanding the Agambian definition, Vilaseca proposes in *Queer Events* that bare life characterizes the condition of queers in contemporary post-permissive Western societies, asking how queer subjectivities can be symbolically represented by the figure of *homo sacer* (180). As he suggests, Lee Edelman’s magisterial work, *No Future*, announces the negative futurity of queers, for whom life under the politico-cultural sentiment at the time is, and will always be, dominated by disavowal and death. In line with Agamben and Edelman, Vilaseca argues that the figure of the queer personifies what is “included solely through its exclusion,” and constantly exists as a variable to social structures of language, identity, and order; furthermore, he explores the possibility of a queer people who would rather occupy the “inassimilable ‘other side’” of structural systems than be incorporated into liberal citizenship. For these reasons, the queer as an example of bare life serves as the contemporary *homo sacer* (180). By associating queer life with bare life—as both are subjected to processes of inclusion-exclusion, dispossession, and exposure, but nevertheless contain subversive possibilities—Vilaseca has brought to light the dynamics of queer subjection/subversion underlying

contemporary biopolitical regimes in which no individual is exempt from the threat of becoming bare.

When examined against the biopolitical take on queer life and bare life, problems concealed at the root of *Middlesex* are made all the more explicit: What kinds of population require enhanced regulation? To what extent can the subjects represent the figure of bare life? How are they managed biopolitically, and through what mechanisms? In what ways does *Middlesex* deliver, or fail to deliver, promises of subversion? In light of these questions, this chapter will proceed by teasing out traces of descriptions in *Middlesex*, in which the life of certain population is coerced by biopolitical control and coaxed into self-regulation to opt for a legitimately proper life. This chapter is divided into two sections, each tackles a problematic aspect of the physical dimension of life. The first instance to be discussed is the biological intersexual body of Cal the protagonist. By examining the medical discourses and the sexual assignment surgery he fights against in the novel, this section proposes that Cal's experiences are not singular events, but a general condition of the lives of intersexual people in North America. The second instance focuses on those strange, freakish, and monstrous bodies in the novel. Starting with Cal's clinical revelation of the monstrosity of his sexually-ambiguous body and the freakish, performing bodies he encounters in the 69ers club, the section underscores the way these characters are excluded by biopolitical discourses. It deals with how the characters live with their bodies, how they subject themselves to a given biopolitical modality, as well as how they attempt to subvert power relations by playing on ambivalent responses elicited out of their own biological strangeness. To explore on a larger scale the regulatory controls that target sexual normalcy with the aid of self-corrective measures, this section begins by delving into Cal's initial uneasiness towards his own desires, and how he later comes to terms with himself; moreover, other characters in the novel whose lives are certainly biopolitically improper will also be analyzed. The topics above—the intersexual body and the

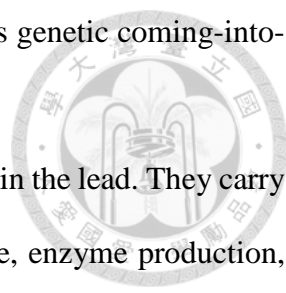
freakish bodies that are sexually and gender-deviant—seek to understand the workings of biopower through revealing the strategies used to manage the body and its biological desires. With the looming presence of death over the pages, such as wars, mass killings, refugee deaths, and decrepitude, *Middlesex* has depicted a world in which humans as living beings or even species have no choice but to cling desperately to life.

Cal's Intersexual Body

The book opens with a very biopolitical declaration. At the beginning of his life story, the autodiegetic narrator divulges, in a matter-of-factly tone replete with scientific terminology yet not without a gesture of poetic temperament, his physical birth and a metaphorical rebirth later in the Clinic: “I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974” (3). The narrator was born a girl named Calliope, but after a medical discovery designating her as an intersex, Calliope renames herself Cal. Recounting details of his life, Cal mentions how he has been “guinea-pigged” in Dr. Peter Luce’s study entitled “Gender Identity in 5-Alpha-Reductase Pseudohermaphrodites,” published in the *Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology*. Moreover, he is also photographed for *Genetics and Heredity*, in which he stood “naked beside a height chart with a black box covering [his] eyes” (3). The apparent parallel drawn between Cal and his condition as an experimental specimen, or even a convict in a mug shot, implies a biopolitical scrutiny on the facticity of his nonconforming, intersexual body, a point that will be discussed in later paragraphs.

Being the omniscient author of his own life story (more specifically, his life *and* pre-life story, in which his self-consciousness dates way back to the origin of the mutated gene),

Cal Stephanides recounts the biological and mythological process of his genetic coming-into-being:



Inside my mother, a billion sperm swim upstream, males in the lead. They carry not only instructions about eye color, height, nose shape, enzyme production, microphage resistance, but a story, too. Against a black background they swim, a long white silken thread spinning itself out. The thread began on a day two hundred and fifty years ago, when the biology gods, for their own amusement, monkeyed with a gene on a baby's fifth chromosome. (210)

Two and a half centuries ago, with a divine twist done by the hands of “the biology gods,” a gene on the fifth chromosome is mutated, and from there it has to be passed down nine generations “until finally . . . on Greek Easter, 1959 . . . [t]he gene is about to meet its twin” (210). As “sperm meets egg,” Cal's life is about to begin. Interestingly, throughout the novel, the narrator exhibits a fixation on his genetic composition. At times, the intersex gene is both an epic achievement and an epic failure that Cal approaches from a distance, as he is often seen referring to the family genetic pool as “polluted”—“Sing now, O Muse, of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome! . . . Sing how it passed down through nine generations, gathering invisibly within the *polluted* pool of the Stephanides family” (4; emphasis added). At times, Cal appears to identify himself with the gene, perceiving it not as one element among countless others that contribute to a part of his physicality, but as a token that alone suffices in representing and defining him. For instance, when Cal retells the event of his conception, he stresses especially on the genetic combination that distinguishes him from other countless possible selves, saying that the singularity of his self and body is the result of a particular recessive mutation. As Cal explains in the novel:

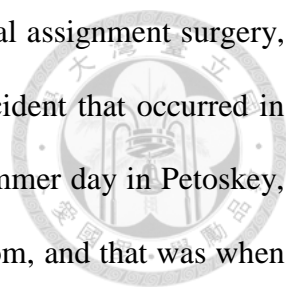
The timing of the thing had to be just so in order for me to *become the person I am*. Delay the act by an hour and you change the gene selection. . . . Not me but

somebody like me might have been made that night. An infinite number of possible selves crowded the threshold. (11; emphasis added)

It seems that for Cal, his consciousness and identity are founded solely upon the gene, and the gene, in turn, is his unique marker of the self. This conflicting response towards his own body, which presents the tug between a blood that is polluted, and the fact that his very existence depends upon the defect, is manifested in the over-emphasis on his biological making. That is why Cal searches exhaustively for the origin of this genetic mutation in the Stephanides family tree, wherein the incestuous union of his grandparents, who are brother and sister, is shown to have been the main catalyst.¹⁰ By pinpointing the cause of his intersexuality in the randomness of divine will that occurred nine generations ago and its perpetuation in the familial guilt of inbreeding, Cal suggests that the condition of his body is his inherited original sin. As Carroll notes in *Rereading Heterosexuality*, this neat deduction of Cal's intersexual state to a single genetic cause—a “roller-coaster ride of a single gene through time” (4)—not only demonstrates a certain branch of medical science, but also is “symptomatic of a narrative logic which serves to fix the indeterminacy of intersexed identity by reference to a founding origin” (Carroll, *Rereading Heterosexuality* 113). This anchoring of identity to a reductive account of the body, following Carroll, is presented in *Middlesex* by Cal's genetic determinist approach to his own life, an approach that leads to his self-foreclosure of the possibilities for autonomous sexual desires and gender identities.

A middle-aged intersexual person living as a heterosexual male and working in the cultural division of the *Amerika Haus* in Berlin, Cal as a politically-correct cosmopolitan man is only *biopolitically*-incorrect in one aspect: beneath the macho pretensions of confidence, his former feminine self, Calliope, is still sharing a body with him. Cal's most subversive feat

¹⁰ The Stephanides family tree is a diagram in Dr. Luce's study on the “Autosomal Transmission of Recessive Traits” (198), which means that Cal's genetic trait is the combination of two copies of a recessive allele he inherited from his grandparents Lefty and Desdemona.



against normalization is undoubtedly his escape from Dr. Luce’s sexual assignment surgery, which took place after his “true sex” had been revealed due to an accident that occurred in Petoskey when he was 14 (at the time, he was still Calliope). On a summer day in Petoskey, Michigan, 1974, a tractor accident sent Calliope into an emergency room, and that was when she realized she was no longer an ordinary girl. Upon discovery of her intersexual body, Calliope was first taken to their family physician, the old Armenian Dr. Philobosian who failed to notice anything at her birth. Even when he had been acknowledged of the possibility of her ambiguous sex, he still “didn’t seem to want to know,” and freely “squirted out the antibacterial soap” after palpation as if to prevent contamination of any sort (403). Later in Dr. Peter Luce’s “Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinic” in New York, Calliope as well as the reader are gradually being informed of her physical condition amidst professional terms:

[Dr. Luce] had received the results of the endocrinological tests performed at Henry Ford Hospital, and so knew of my XY karyotype, my high plasma testosterone levels, and the absence in my blood of dihydrotestosterone. In other words, before even seeing me, Luce was able to make an educated guess that I was a *male pseudohermaphrodite*—genetically male but appearing otherwise, with 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrome. But that, according to Luce’s thinking, *did not mean that I had a male gender identity* . . . he couldn’t be sure until he had looked at a sample under a microscope. (413; emphasis added)

Especially worth noting here are, first, the excessive use of medical jargons and, second, the obsessive preoccupation with sex and gender. As mentioned before, the narrative in *Middlesex* is surrounded by an aura of scientificity characterized by Cal’s habit of using medical jargons. This phenomenon is in fact common among intersexual people, as Sharon E. Preves writes in “Sexing the Intersexed,” those jargons are often used when intersexuals talk about experiences related to their bodies. They tend to speak of their “‘conditions’ or ‘endocrine disorders’”

instead of using simpler terms, “reflect[ing] the widespread acceptance of a medical paradigm, which makes it difficult for lay persons to question medical opinion or authority” (532). In *Middlesex*, both the doctors as well as Cal tend to adopt abstruse terms when referring to any biological process or phenomenon. For the medical practitioners, it is a way to remain privileged and absolute in their diagnoses, yet for Cal and for other patients alike, the phenomenon only exposes their forced intake of jargons and utter dependence on medical authority.

In addition to overusing professional terms, the other practice to be problematized is the obsession over the assignment of sex and gender through medical interventions. Although genetically speaking, Calliope was born male, Dr. Luce insisted on conducting a psychological evaluation to determine her “prevailing gender” before performing an assignment surgery to “correct” or “finish” her “not quite finished” genitals by making it the “right size” (433). Ironically, Calliope tampered with the evaluation process by consciously submitting writings to Dr. Luce that demonstrated her heterosexuality (despite her homosexual involvement with the Obscure Object¹¹). But after coming across Dr. Luce’s manuscript about her condition, she realized that rather than undergoing hormone injections and cosmetic surgeries that would make her look like a normal girl, she preferred the appearance of a man. Thus she left her parents a letter, signed her name “Callie” for the last time, and ran away from home. This entire incident, initiated by the surgery aimed at managing Cal’s ambiguous conditions, may well be representative of the intersex experience characterized by the push to medically construct an unambiguous body.

The 1950s United States saw the rise of postwar conservatism as well as the development of a new theory in psychology and psychiatry. John Money at Johns Hopkins presented a study on the necessity of conducting corrective genital surgery on intersexual

¹¹ The Obscure Object is a girl who once engaged in a secret romantic relationship with Calliope.

children, claiming that the surgery, if performed on the child patient at an early stage, would fix the ambiguous genitalia and thus rid the parents of confusion over the uncertainty of sex and gender. Consequently, Money believes, parents will then be able to ensure family stability for the successful psychosexual development of the child, and to prepare the child for his or her eventual assimilation into a society deeply divided by sex (Feder 89). Even though Cal, writing in 2002 at the age of forty-one, has successfully established a hyper-masculine appearance and is able to pass as a “normal” man as long as he remains closeted, he nevertheless feels shameful about his intersexual organ. In a passage in which Cal expresses the self-doubt and insecurity he faces towards building long-term relationships, he mentions how assignment surgery as a standard practice is the result of the pathologization of the intersexual body:

The intersex movement aims to put an end to infant genital reconfiguration surgery. The first step in that struggle is to convince the world—and pediatric endocrinologists in particular—that *hermaphroditic genitals are not diseased*. One out of every two thousand babies is born with ambiguous genitalia. In the United States, with a population of two hundred and seventy-five million, that comes to one hundred and thirty-seven thousand intersexuals alive today.¹²

But we hermaphrodites are people like everybody else. (106; emphasis added)

Being a member of the Intersex Society of North America¹³ (although Cal himself notes that he has been apathetic towards intersex activism), Cal may just be one in tens of millions of

¹² According to a recent article written by Alice Dreger (2017), an acclaimed scholar on intersexuality, around one in 2000 children in the world is born with intersex genitals. In 2017 U.S., at least one in 300 is born with a “difference of sex development (DSD)” that is visually discernible and may be subjected to early medical treatment.

¹³ The official website of ISNA states that the organization has closed down due to widespread misconceptions regarding their positions. Starting in 2008, Accord Alliance has been operating in place of ISNA.

unnamed intersexuals in the world, who are born in need of treatment and stigmatized should they refuse to be corrected.¹⁴

Medical intervention of intersexuality deploys a biopolitically-based rhetoric in order to build a rationale for the treatment, citing catchwords such as “normalcy” and “health” to warn unknowing parents against the dangers of not fixing the “sex errors” of the child’s “sexually unfinished” body.¹⁵ One of the often-quoted surgical benefits is the promise of normalcy, which interpellates intersexual individuals to *pass as* normal subjects, to take normalization as their social obligation, regardless of their mental or physical state. If a body resists correction and exists as a disruption to what is understood as normal, it would be labelled as a case of stigma and therefore alienated from the society (Preves 524). Besides the urge to “secure” deviant bodies from a life of despair, “health” is also a term frequently enlisted by medical experts when referring to the rewards of surgical alterations. From the case studied in Ellen K. Feder’s article “Doctor’s Orders: Parents and Intersexed Children” (298), it is clear that for the parents, to refuse medical interventions such as examinations and treatments that use their intersexual children as experimental subjects is a decision that denies the generous subsidies offered by the hospital, which will lead to both financial and medical crises that risk

¹⁴ Intersex activists have been calling for a stop in medical interventions imposed on intersexual children. In the Amnesty International campaign for the rights of intersexual children, they state that 1.7% children in the world are born with variations in sex characteristics, which includes those with intersexual organs. They argue that the surgery is “often not emergency-driven, invasive, and irreversible,” and since neither the parents nor the children have been aware or fully acknowledged of the consequences before consenting to the surgery, it is also a violation of human rights. Moreover, Amnesty International reports that for intersexuals, medical interventions may cause “lasting negative impacts on their health, sexual lives, psychological well-being, and their gender identity.”

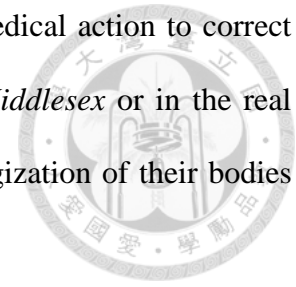
In *Intersexuality and the Law: Why Sex Matters*, Julie A. Greenberg presents the three solutions that have been proposed in the past to protect the fundamental rights of intersexual children:

- (1) Allow parents to continue to control the decision but only under enhanced informed consent procedures
- (2) Delay all medically unnecessary surgeries until children mature and can make their own decision
- (3) Allow the surgeries to continue but impose some type of oversight by a court or an ethics committee (35)

However, as all three solutions are inherently problematic, Greenberg offers a fourth alternative, which is to “require an ethics committee recommendation and court approval” (42). For a detailed account, please see pages 27-43.

¹⁵ *Sex Errors of the Body: Dilemmas, Education, Counseling* (1968) is John Money’s publication on intersex treatment, and “Hermaphrodites: The Sexually Unfinished” is the title of an episode of *The Geraldo Rivera Show* (1989) in which Money was a participant.

the lives of their children. Treated as a passive object “in need of medical action to correct ‘pathologies’” (Preves 524), the intersexual individual, whether in *Middlesex* or in the real world, is still engaged in a constant fight against the clinical pathologization of their bodies and identities.



The Freakish Body

In Foucault’s 1974-1975 lectures on abnormality, intersexuality in the Classical Age was deemed as a type of monstrosity. According to Foucault, hermaphroditic monsters in the Middle Ages would be executed, burned, and had their ashes disposed into the wind, because their “second sex” was considered a Satanic trait (*Abnormal* 67). The 17th century required hermaphrodites to conform to and dress as a certain gender, and would be charged with sodomy if their “additional sex” was used (67). Around the beginning of the 18th century, the discourse was both traditional and scientific: a person with two sexes was still deemed a monster, but it was a monster whose gender and sexuality could be determined via medical examinations (71). By the end of the 18th century, hermaphrodites were no longer a mixing of sexes or a transgression of sexual boundary; rather, the condition was “only a defective structure accompanied by impotence” and characterized by “eccentricities, kinds of imperfection, errors of nature” (72). As an irregularity and a deviation, the hermaphroditic monster implied “a monstrosity of *conduct* rather than the monstrosity of nature” (73; emphasis added). While Foucault has not discussed what happened after the 19th century in the *Abnormal* lectures, he later clarifies in *Society Must Be Defended* that since the emergence of modern regimes from the 19th century onward, human subjects have been perceived in relation to body parts that can be scrutinized and standardized along biopolitical logics. The result of this change in target, to

expand Foucault's idea, can be understood as the simultaneous monsterization of the conduct *and* the nature of the deviant subject.

Elizabeth Grosz's article "Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit" brilliantly defines the characteristics of the freak. She maintains that being unusual or atypical does not entail the becoming freak of an individual; instead, the freak must be "neither unusually gifted or unusually disadvantaged. He or she is not an object of *simple* admiration or pity" but an existence that evokes both fascination and repulsion (56; emphasis in original). As Grosz further explains, "the freak is an *ambiguous* being whose existence imperils categories and oppositions dominant in social life," occupying the "impossible middle ground" that demarcates the line between human/animal, self/other, nature/culture, male/female, adults/children, humans/gods, as well as the living/the dead (57; emphasis in original). The mere presence of the freak challenges to disrupt these established categorical order, as a result, what is deemed abnormal or ambiguous must be eradicated.

Following Preves in understanding the control of intersexual "deviance" as the outcome of "cultural tendencies toward gender binarism, homophobia, and *fear of difference*" (524; emphasis added), this section discusses depictions of strange and freakish bodies in *Middlesex* and argues that what leads to the monsterization of these bodies is exactly the sociocultural "fear of difference" that marginalizes intersexual subjects. Three key events in the novel marking the border between normal/abnormal and human/monster will be examined: the hermaphroditic monstrosity instigated by the Minotaur, intersexuality as synonymous with "monster" in the Webster's Dictionary, and the sexually and gender-deviant performers at the Sixty-Niners club.

The combination and perpetuation of a taboo marriage, the recessive intersex gene was combined and passed down by Cal's grandparents, Lefty and Desdemona, was initiated by an event involving *The Minotaur*. *The Minotaur* was a play performed at the Family Theater that

Lefty and Desdemona watched with their cousin Sourmelina and her husband Jimmy Zizmo. The quartet expected a traditional Greek drama, yet they were instead presented with an unconventional interpretation of the myth, one that displayed chorus girls dancing and prancing onstage dressed in see-through costumes, while the bull-headed creature preyed on them:

The Minotaur appeared, an actor wearing a papier-mâché bull's head. . . . He growled; drums pounded; chorus girls screamed and fled. The Minotaur pursued, and of course he caught them, each one, and devoured her bloodily, and dragged her pale, defenseless body deeper into the maze. (108)

At first, the scene appeared bloody, but was transformed into dreams that flows with desire. The tension exhibited so boldly and wildly by the play had become the stimulus that impregnated both Desdemona and Sourmelina. That night after the show, Sourmelina dreamt of chorus girls, while simultaneously, Desdemona had also been aroused, reluctantly, by “[t]he Minotaur’s savage, muscular thighs [and the] suggestive sprawl of his victims” (108). It was the erotic desire, driven on the one hand by the stereotypical sexy, screaming female victims, and the violently masculine and primitive predator on the other, that brought about the event the narrator termed “Simultaneous Fertilization” (107). By attributing the perpetuation of a faulty gene to not only consanguinity but also socio-culturally inappropriate maternal imagination during the moment of child conception, Cal seems to have discovered yet another explanation for his bodily difference, pointing to the “hybrid monster” as the “direct cause” to his deformity (109). Many instances in *Middlesex* suggest that Cal in fact identifies himself as a hybrid subject. For example, he refers to his “complicated hybrid emotions” (217), and compares his intersexual genitalia to a “hybrid” plant.¹⁶ He writes, “I worried at times that my

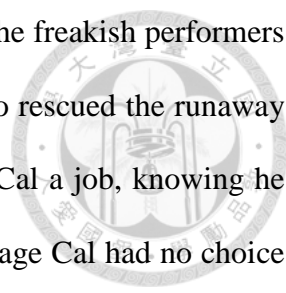
¹⁶ Cal/Calliope likens his growing intersex genitalia to “A kind of crocus itself, just before flowering. A pink stem pushing up through dark new moss. But a strange kind of flower indeed, because it seemed to go through a number of seasons in a single day. It had its dormant winter when it slept underground. Five minutes later, it stirred in a private springtime. . . . To the touch, the crocus sometimes felt soft and slippery, like the flesh of a worm. At other times it was as hard as a root” (329-30).

crocus was too elaborate a bloom, not a common perennial but a hothouse flower, a *hybrid* named by its originator like a rose. Iridescent Hellene. Pale Olympus. Greek Fire” (330; emphasis added). This frequent, and even intentional, association on Cal’s part implies a connection between hybrid monstrosity and the sex/gender hybridity of intersexuals.

The monsterization of Calliope is also accomplished through the significance of language. The first time Calliope was introduced to the synonym of “hermaphrodite,” she was flipping through a Webster’s Dictionary. It all started out as an innocent attempt at looking up a word she didn’t know—“hypospadias.” From the word, Calliope was directed to its synonym “eunuch,” and then to the word “hermaphrodite.” On the page, she learned the word synonymous to her physical condition: “monster.” The Webster’s Dictionary reads:

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. (430; emphasis in original)

Although only objectively providing a casual association between hermaphrodite and monster, the Webster’s Dictionary, here symbolizing absolute knowledge and unchallenged authority, seemed for Calliope a “verdict” given by the culture (432). At the age of 14, she realized that she was a monster through and through, not unlike the “Big Foot” or the “Loch Ness Monster” whose photographs would satiate people’s curiosity towards the different and the grotesque (432). With this passage, the link between intersexuality and monstrosity becomes apparent in *Middlesex*: manipulating a “fear of difference” that might compromise established borders of sex and gender, biopower reinforces its social and national stability by first defining the hermaphroditic monster and then expelling it, so that the society is purified and order is again restored.



Adding to the monstrosity Calliope found in the Webster's are the freakish performers at San Francisco's sex club, Sixty-Niners. After club owner Bob Presto rescued the runaway Cal and discovered the freakish condition of his body, Presto offered Cal a job, knowing he would be a gold mine for his business. Desperate for money, the underage Cal had no choice but to tell Presto he was 18 so he could work at the sex club, although illegally. Cal refers to his past experiences of posing as an object in medical examinations: "I made my living by exhibiting the peculiar way I am formed. The Clinic had prepared me for it, numbing my sense of shame" (483). His intersexuality, which forced him to leave home, ironically ended up being the saving grace of his dilemma. In the club, Cal works in a regular peep show called "Octopussy's Garden," along with other two performers: "Melanie the Mermaid," or Zora in real life, whose Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome gives her a feminine appearance but not the ability to reproduce; and Carmen, who displays herself as "Ellie and her Electrifying Eel," which is named after her pre-operative, MTF transsexual body with female breasts and male genitals. Cal too has his own stage name, which unsurprisingly turns out to be "The God Hermaphroditus" who is "½ man, ½ woman" (481). Featuring freakish bodies in a large tank filled with water, the peep show operates by having Cal and other two performers submerge from the waist down (with their heads out of the water if they want), exhibiting their physical abnormalities to pay-per-view customers who peep from holes or pipes in separate rooms. In the following passage, Cal reveals the mechanism of peeping, and the freakish desires that circulate within the small booths where customers await the start of the show:

Viewers got to see strange things, uncommon bodies, but much of the appeal was the transport involved. Looking through their portholes, the customers were *watching real bodies do the things bodies sometimes did in dreams*. There were male customers, married heterosexual men, who sometimes dreamed of making love to women who possessed penises, not male penises, but thin, tapering

feminized stalks, like the stamens of flowers, clitorises that had elongated tremendously from abundant desire. There were gay customers who dreamed of boys who were almost female, smooth-skinned, hairless. There were lesbian customers who dreamed of women with penises, not male penises but womanly erections, possessing a sensitivity and aliveness no dildo ever had. (486; emphasis added)

These dreams of “sexual transmogrification” (486) are prohibited desires forever inaccessible and unacceptable by the sexual deviants who choose to pass as heterosexuals so they can live normally among humans. What is peculiar in the passage is that the intersexual body of Cal, as well as other ambiguous body of the freaks, are in a way drawing attention to “the act of *seeing* as sustaining the mystery of the body’s intelligibility” (Gozlan 31; emphasis added). In the case of the Sixty-Niners peep show, the intelligibility of freakish bodies is sustained via media of glass wall, water, and dreamy responses that those grotesquely seductive bodies are able to elicit in their customers.

Chapter 3: Biopolitics, Racism, and the Immigrant



On Racism and Biopolitics¹⁷

In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault traces the genealogy of racism back to the 16th and early 17th century, when race struggle, a new form of discourse, appears as a counterhistory which is “the complete antithesis of the history of sovereignty” (69). With its emergence, the understanding of history as a unified experience is replaced by the notion of heterogeneity, pointing to the fact that history is always a multi-faceted construct contingent upon the speaker. As Foucault writes, “one man’s victory is another man’s defeat” (69), this counterhistory not only disrupts the sovereign law but also poses a threat to the legitimacy of authority, revealing the effect of power as benefiting, or shedding light on, a portion of the social body, while the rest is left in the shadow. It is in darkness that this counterhistory speaks, for it is “the discourse of those who have no glory” (70), or the appeal of those who are in the dark, deprived of the right to speak. For example, during the Puritan Revolts in New England and the French

¹⁷ As my oral examiners have pointed out, race and ethnicity are two concepts guided by different logics. My understanding of the terms in this thesis follows Chow’s interpretation in her work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. For Chow, race and ethnicity are often conflated in their use because the terms are “mutually implicated” (23). She draws on Etienne Balibar’s essay “Is There a Neo-Racism?” and perceives “race” as a concept that had been associated with absolute biological characteristics in the 19th century, but is reformulated, after the Second World War, into one that hierarchizes cultural differences to justify racism (13). According to Balibar, “biological or genetic naturalism is not the only means of naturalizing human behaviour and social affinities. . . . [C]ulture can also function like a nature, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin” (22; emphasis in original). In this sense, the biological underpinnings of race partly overlap with the “fictive” idea of ethnicity which, for Chow, is derived from the social imaginary constituted by culture and representation (24). Race and ethnicity, then, can be understood as concepts entwined within biopolitical discourses that hold biological referents accountable for sociocultural differences. For example, in his manuscript on the intersex condition of Calliope, Dr. Luce writes: “[T]he subject has been raised in the Greek Orthodox tradition. . . . [T]he parents seem assimilationist and very ‘all-American’ in their outlook, but the presence of this deeper ethnic identity should not be overlooked” (436). While Chow finds the term “race” deeply embedded in a “residual biologism” and therefore centers her discussion on the “ethnic” to enable a sociocultural analysis (24), it is due to this undeniable connection with the (although pseudo) biological and the physical that racism is implicated in the biopolitical management.

Revolution against King Louis XIV in the 17th and 18th centuries, a political-military discourse was utilized to challenge the sovereign power.

Since the 17th century, war is no longer perceived as the “uninterrupted frame of history”; instead, the social body is structured around the war of two races. Foucault declares, “The war that is going on beneath order and peace, the war that undermines our society and divides it in a binary mode is, basically, a race war” (*SMBD* 59-60). The word “race” here is by no means used in the general sense pertaining to biological traits, but can be understood as one of the two conflicting components divided from a single social entity. A form of racism in the late 18th century that Foucault describes serves as an example of the significance of the word. To maintain and expand its hegemony, the bourgeoisie aimed for an “indefinite extension of strength, vigor, health, and life” and “cultivated” its own body through attention “on body hygiene, the art of longevity, ways of having healthy children and of keeping them alive as long as possible, and methods for improving the human lineage” (*HS* 125). Such form of “dynamic racism” or “racism of expansion” illustrates how the word “race” is loosened from its contemporary biological definition to incorporate class and social connotations (125).

This Foucauldian interpretation of “race” also suggests two transcriptions that occurred in the discourse of war in the early 19th century: the first transcription is a biological one, which borrows its discourse from materialist anatomico-physiology and philology, and is articulated with nationalism and colonialism; the second one is social war, which attempts to rework its traces of racial conflicts into class struggle (*SMBD* 60). By the end of this century, biologicosocial racism, or modern racism, was born as the result of these two transformations. Regarding the formulation of this new type of racism, Lemke explains:

This “racism” . . . draws on elements of the biological version in order to formulate an answer to the social revolutionary challenge. In place of the

historical-political thematic of war, with its slaughters, victories, and defeats, enters the evolutionary-biological model of the struggle for life. (41)

The exclusive biological concern of racism in the 19th century is how the word “race” has come to take on its contemporary meaning: which is the classification of humankind based on its shared physical traits or genetic markers. The society is still polarized and at war, yet it is a war not between two different races, but of a single race which has split into a superrace and a subrace that are constantly at odds. While the discourse of race struggle is essentially a tactic deployed by the subrace in decentered camps, still it can infiltrate the social system, subject to constant re-creation in and by the social fabric, and recenter itself so it becomes “the discourse of a centered, centralized, and centralizing power” that portrays itself as the “one true race” (*SMBD* 61). The biological-racist discourse, in this way, functions as the creator and keeper of norms, and is entitled to punish those who deviate from or threaten the cohesion of society through practices of exclusion and segregation to attain normalizing effects. In a modern society characterized by racism, Foucault reminds us,

[The motto] is no longer: “We have to defend ourselves against society,” but “We have to defend society against all the biological threats posed by the other race, the subrace, the counterrace that we are, despite ourselves, bringing into existence.” (61-62)

When sovereign power merges with biopower and political-military discourse infiltrated by a racist-biological one, race struggle becomes literally the struggle for life.

In the lecture following the introduction to the discourse of race war, Foucault further explains his conception. He notes that the discourse is not one that belongs solely to the oppressed; rather, it is “a mobile discourse, a polyvalent discourse” that can be shared by different enemies and always occupies the oppositional space (*SMBD* 77). In addition, Foucault makes clear his use of the word “race,” emphasizing that it does not entail a fixed

biological category. Rather, it indicates a “historico-political divide” between two coexistent groups that cannot be mixed due to dissymmetries and hierarchies created by power relations, and only with acts of violence, such as wars, invasions, and occupations can they be unified into a single polity (77). As mentioned earlier, modern racism is born at the juncture of the rise of two transcriptions—or two counterhistories—in the first half of the 19th century. Whereas one transcription attempts to reformulate race struggle into class struggle, the other responds by recoding the idea of race (historico-political) into races (biologico-medical), and from it modern racism comes to take a clear form (80).

Characteristic of this new variety of racism is not so much war fought between two peoples in the historical sense, but the postevolutionist struggle for existence that produces a binary division of race as well as a “biologically monist” society (80). When confronted with external or internal threats that are heterogeneous and accidental, such as foreigners and anti-norm deviants, the society takes to racism to purge itself of uncontrollable elements. Consequently, for Foucault, the role of the State that was “unjust” in the counterhistory of races was inverted:

the State is no longer an instrument that one race uses against another: the State is, and must be, the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race. The idea of racial purity, with all its monistic, Statist, and biological implications: that is what replaces the idea of race struggle. (81)

In other words, the modern, biological racism occurs right at the moment when the idea of racial purity emerges. What has been the counter-discourse of races that struggle against traditional sovereignty ends up being reclaimed by the State; as a result, “the *proto*-revolutionary discourse is converted into the *anti*-revolutionary discourse of State racism” (Prozorov 101; emphasis in original). Race comes to be defined by its singular form, being the one true race that protects and promotes the State through medico-normalizing techniques so

as to negate any possibility of revolution. As such, Lemke aptly concludes, “a discourse *against* power is transformed into a discourse *of* power” (44; emphasis added). The biopolitical principle of the modern State deploying this discourse of power, therefore, is to defend the social body against biological dangers.

In light of a racial purity to be achieved via conformity to medical and hygienic norms, racism as exercised in the biopolitical present constitutes the fundamental structures of governmental power, to the extent that “the modern State can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism” (*SMBD* 254). What Foucault has in mind here concerns the two functions of racism. The first is “to fragment, to create caesuras” within a biological continuum; in other words, to create fissures in a single polity with a view to generating oppositions and hierarchies that will expose what must be homogenized or purified. The second function of racism is to establish a dynamic, “positive” relation: that is, being able to kill others in the name of improving life (255). Unlike the traditional dead-end relationship between self and enemy, racism allows for an advanced, war-like relationship which establishes a biological-type connection between my life and the deaths I caused. The self and other involved here are less related to the individual than they are to the species as a whole. In Foucault’s words,

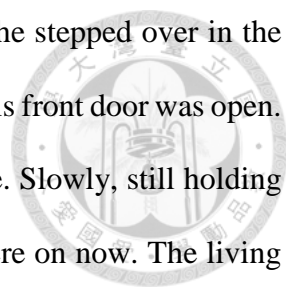
The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer. (255)

In a normalizing society, elimination of the other not only efficiently fulfills the demands for security and wellbeing but is in itself an act of life enhancement; in other words, killing has become a biopolitical necessity made acceptable by race or racism. Functioning as the precondition for the legitimate deprivation of life, liberty, as well as property, this new pro-life

racism that emerged in the 19th century is modeled on a war waged with the aim of improving and regenerating one's race.

In *Middlesex*, this “death-function in the economy of biopower” ensured by modern racism is most evidently manifested in the Turkish ethnic cleansing of Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians (*SMBD* 258). Before Cal's grandparents Lefty and Desdemona immigrated to Detroit, they were brother and sister living on Mount Olympus in Asia Minor. Although their parents were killed in the recent Greco-Turkish War in 1922, they as well as other villagers of Bithynios felt assured under the aegis of the *Megale Idea*, the pan-Hellenic “Big Idea” that would make them “free Greeks [...] in a free Greek city” liberated from the rule of the Turks (21).¹⁸ However, the Greek Army collapsed in the face of a Turkish counterattack, setting fire to everything as they retreated to the sea, and soon Lefty and Desdemona were forced to escape from the fires and smokes in Bithynios, unaware that their destination, Smyrna, was also about to be set ablaze. Citizens and refugees believed that in Smyrna they would be safe from the Turks, for at that time the city was protected by the Allied fleets that supported the Greek military expansion (which led to the Greco-Turkish War) on commercial, and perhaps religious grounds (a majority of Turkish people were Muslims). As the Armenian Dr. Philobosian tries to convince himself, “the European powers would never let the Turks enter the city” and that “[e]ven during the massacres of 1915 the Armenians of Smyrna had been safe” (45). Yet again all hopes were doomed to disappointment as the Allied forces received orders to remain neutral, and even after the Turkish troops entered the city, massacred the population, and then set the land on fire, the European ships refused to take in any refugee. In stark contrast to the optimism before the Great Fire of Smyrna, a passage in *Middlesex* depicts the brutality committed by the Turkish troops through the eyes of Dr. Philobosian:

¹⁸ In *Women and Nationalism in the Making of Modern Greece*, Demetra Tzanaki defines the term “Megale Idea” as “the Great Idea, that is, the liberation and unification of the Hellenic *genos*—the orthodox community under the Ottoman Empire—and the establishment of a great Greek state in the lands that had once formed part of the Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as its capital” (3).



It didn't occur to Dr. Philobosian that the twisted body he stepped over in the street belonged to his younger son. He noticed only that his front door was open. In the foyer, he stopped to listen. There was only silence. Slowly, still holding his doctor's bag, he climbed the stairs. All the lamps were on now. The living room was bright. Toukhie was sitting on the sofa, waiting for him. Her head had fallen backward as though in hilarity, the angle opening the wound so that a section of windpipe gleamed. Stepan sat slumped at the dining table, his right hand, which held the letter of protection, nailed down with a steak knife. Dr. Philobosian took a step and slipped, then noticed a trail of blood leading down the hallway. He followed the trail into the master bedroom, where he found his two daughters. They were both naked, lying on their backs. Three of their four breasts had been cut off. Rose's hand reached out toward her sister as though to adjust the silver ribbon across her forehead. (60-61)

Here Cal's narrative seems to be suspended in a moment of emotional void. Without his usual witty humor and poetic sentiment, Cal chooses to record the desolate reality in silence, forcing his readers to enter the vacuum of spatiality and temporality left behind by the mass murder, and to pose as a witness to the crime just as Dr. Philobosian witnessed the extinction of his family.

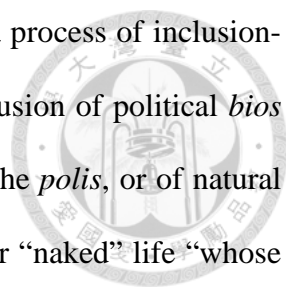
The atrocity of war is this: killings and deaths are never singular events that take place only within the Philobosian household or in the fictional dimension of the novel. Instead, from Foucault's indictment of modern politics concerning the intrinsic *racism* in all normalizing biopolitical states (Stoler 88), forms of war, understood in the perspective of the discourse of race war, represent a schism at the root of a society. This schism is always in the process of "an incomplete cleansing of the social body," and whose maintenance depends upon the biopolitical idea that "structures social fields of action, guides political practices, and is

realized through state apparatuses” (Lemke 43-44). The Turkish ethnic cleansing¹⁹ of Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians was articulated in the language of biopolitics as well. According to Taner Akçam in *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity*, the Ottoman Empire, although once multi-ethnic and religious-tolerant, resorted to xenophobic policies after it devolved into nation-states. With the rise of nationalist consciousness, the nation-states strove for independence, and the first step was to demarcate a clear social and geographical border. By “purging” themselves from not only internal deviation but also any foreign population, they could in turn build an ethnically and religiously coherent polity. Yet the mass violence brought about by this fantasy of a “pure” nation-state in the 19th century escalated in the early decades of the 20th century, during which human destructiveness occurred on an unimaginable scale. Efforts to define, reconstruct, and protect the Ottoman borders precipitated “wars and revolutions, brutally suppressed rebellions, forced population exchanges, deportations and ethnic cleansing, massacres and genocide” (x). The succession of atrocities carried on until the Ottoman government signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, an agreement that led to the establishment of the new Republic of Turkey. Back in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire began to see a surge in its Muslim population, mostly migrants and expellees, and by the time of the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, the number of migrants peaked. This presented a challenge to the Ottoman authorities, as they had been reactive in dealing with immigrant problems. In response to the sudden increase of population, they devised a plan targeted at the “ethnoreligious homogenization” of Anatolia as a way to “free [themselves] of non-Turkish elements” in the Aegean region (29). This policy of “population and resettlement,” which reshaped the region’s demographics to cater to its Muslim Turkish population, was consisted

¹⁹ Gordon Severance and Diana Severance in *Against the Gates of Hell* compare Turkey’s ethnic genocide to the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. They attribute the Turkish government’s persistent denial of, and later impunity from, the genocidal crimes committed during 1915-1922 as the direct cause that encouraged Nazi Germany to carry out its own ethnic cleansing against the Jews. They hold Turkey partly responsible for the Holocaust (as well as future genocides) by listing several similarities between the two (385-88).

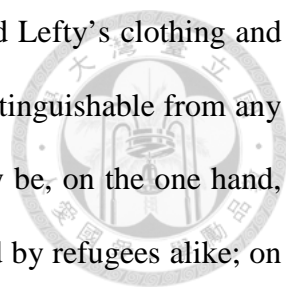
of two main purposes: first, the “cleansing” of non-Muslim populations (i.e., Christians) of Anatolia, who posed to the empire not only a “mortal threat” but a physical risk like “cancer” in the body of the state; second, the assimilation, or “Turkification,” of Anatolia’s non-Turkish Muslim populations (29). Similar to what Foucault argues, the ethnic genocide in Turkey, articulated by modern racism, was not a temporary construct subject to certain ideologies found only in exceptional cases, nor an ad hoc response to sudden change. It was operated through state apparatuses in a biopolitical language, citing words such as “purge,” “pure,” and “cancer” to rationalize the inhuman crimes conducted for the wellness of its own population and, above all, the military and economic strength of the nation.

The Turkish biopolitical ambition at purifying the Anatolia produced countless refugees along the way, displacing and dispossessing “harmful” racial and ethnic groups as Turkish troops marched toward a “healthy” nation. In Agamben’s formulations, these refugees—including the Greeks and Armenians in *Middlesex*—are the modern victims of a political paradigm that originated with the formation of the ancient Greek *polis*. Refugees are a population that has been excluded from a country of origin, and therefore neither belongs to a nation-state nor has any access to the protection provided by the nation-state. That is, refugees become killable objects in the sense that the laws and rights guaranteed by the state no longer apply to them, for they have been abandoned and relegated to the condition of bare life, or *homo sacer*. The figure of *homo sacer*, in the words of Agamben, is “[a]n obscure figure of archaic Roman law, in which human life is included in the juridical order [*ordinamento*] solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)” (*Homo Sacer* 8). Articulating how this bare human life coincides with the political realm, Agamben extends Foucault’s concept of biopolitics. For Agamben, what Foucault saw as a modern phenomenon—the inclusion of natural life into the mechanisms of state power—can in fact be traced back to the foundation of Ancient Greek city-state and the division of life into *zoe* and *bios*. As has been



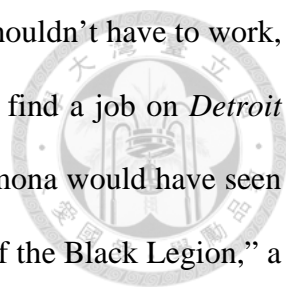
explained in the first chapter of this thesis, the *polis* is founded upon a process of inclusion-exclusion that produces bare life. The process involves a primary inclusion of political *bios* and natural *zoe* into the *polis*, and a secondary exclusion of *zoe* from the *polis*, or of natural life from *bios*. It is this latter separation that gives rise to this “bare” or “naked” life “whose exclusion founds the city of men” (7). Under sovereign operation, human life is reduced to bare life when a state of exception is declared. Drawing on Carl Schmitt’s notion that the sovereign has the legal authority to suspend valid law, Agamben brings out the central paradox of sovereignty by proposing that the sovereign is “at the same time outside and inside the juridical order” (15). This paradoxical state of exception, in which the sovereign suspends the existing juridical order to ensure and expand its own power, creates an indistinction between violence and law. As Agamben stresses, the *nomos* of sovereignty is “*the principle that, joining law and violence, threatens them with indistinction*” (31; emphasis in original). Such is the underlying paradigm that informs the structure of sovereignty. This state of indistinguishability, which has become pervasive in modern politics, produces the figure of bare life whose paradoxical existence depends upon its position both inside and outside the law. In a time when exception becomes the rule and violence passes over into law, the refugee emerges as the contemporary exemplar of bare life.

Being the “bearer of the link between violence and law” (HS 65), refugees exist in a suspended state, a zone of indistinction wherein they are neither politically-qualified nor geographically-secured. However, Agamben also argues in *Homo Sacer* that refugees as a byproduct of modern warfare is capable of exposing the “originary fiction” of sovereignty; that is, the “secret presupposition” upon which the *polis* is founded (131). For Agamben, refugees break the “continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*” because they have been severed from their mother country and forced into a liminal space, in which they are either deprived of national status or about to take on a new nationality (131; emphasis in original). In



Middlesex, when Dr. Philobosian first met Lefty in Smyrna, he noticed Lefty's clothing and the wound on his finger, but saw "only a blank for a face; he was indistinguishable from any of the refugees swarming the quay" (46). The indistinguishability may be, on the one hand, due to Lefty's disorientation and desperation, which are feelings shared by refugees alike; on the other hand, the indistinction reveals a suspension of Lefty's nationality. In response to Dr. Philobosian's question about the cut on his hand, Lefty replied, "First the Greeks invaded . . . [t]hen the Turks invaded back. My hand got in the way" (47). The refugee's words appear to be a plain and objective description of what has happened, but the intentional downplay of the war element, as well as the avoidance of using the collective "we" to refer to the Greek army, imply a subtle sentiment of denial. Here Lefty was trying to negate the brutality that his country was inflicting by withholding his Greek origin, and in doing so, he expressed his failure to connect to the mother country in the war. With the increase of refugees and the break of the birth-nation link, Agamben detects a biopolitical tendency in population management after World War I, as he suggests, "the nation-states become greatly concerned with natural life, discriminating within it between a so-to-speak authentic life and a life lacking every political value" (*Homo Sacer* 132). For the Turkish troops, and ironically for the Greek authority, the refugees waiting for evacuation on the quay of Smyrna are like livestock in a "holding pen" that must be exposed to death (46), because while their life lacks any "political value," their exclusion will greatly contribute to the prosperity of the nation's "authentic" lives.

After fleeing from the burning Smyrna and passing off as French to board the ship *Giulia* headed toward Ellis Island, Lefty and Desdemona finally settled in Detroit to live with their cousin Sourmelina and her husband, Jimmy Zizmo. For immigrants, Detroit was the city of wheels, of jobs and opportunities, but it was also a city of machines, of class difference, of segregation and race riots. Ten years after Desdemona arrived in Detroit, she found herself on a streetcar in an unfamiliar neighborhood, looking for a silk factory on Hastings Street. With



revenue from Lefty's bar & grill restaurant Zebra Room, Desdemona shouldn't have to work, but when the Great Depression hit America, she had no choice but to find a job on *Detroit Times* classifieds. Following Cal's account of the 1932 Detroit, Desdemona would have seen policemen who were "secretly members of the white Protestant Order of the Black Legion," a white supremacist terrorist group operating during the Great Depression in Midwestern United States (140). As Cal writes, these secret members "had their own methods for disposing of blacks, Communists, and Catholics" (140). As the streetcar drove into the Black Bottom ghetto, Desdemona noticed that passengers, who are mostly white, "performed a talismanic gesture" in unison as they grabbed tighter onto their belongings, and even the driver pulled shut the rear door (141). The Black Bottom, according to Cal the narrator, was where E. I. Weiss, manager of the Packard Motor Company, claimed to have kept the first "load of niggers" whom he brought to the city as low-wage workers, but it was also an African-American Community that had been gradually gathering strength to become a counterforce to white authority:

Over the years, Black Bottom, for all the whites' attempts to contain it—and because of the inexorable laws of poverty and racism—would slowly spread, street by street, neighborhood by neighborhood, until the so-called ghetto would become the entire city itself, and by the 1970s, in the no-tax-base, white-flight, murder-capital Detroit of the Coleman Young administration, black people could finally live wherever they wanted to. (142)

The first wave of Great Migration from 1916 to 1930 marked the beginning of the expansion of Black Bottom. To escape from racism, segregation, and lynching, and to seek for more job opportunities after the rapid rise of domestic demand in the wake of World War I, large groups of African-Americans from Southern United States moved north to industrial cities, and Detroit was one of their destinations. However, the immense influx of migrants into Detroit led to

several problems, including an overcrowded Black Bottom due to its less expensive living costs and the city's housing segregation, both contributing to the causes of later race riots.

The race riots in Detroit, especially in 1967, can be attributed to five major causes, as Ronald Young writes in an article on the history of the riots (1987-92). Referring to the survey conducted by *The Detroit Free Press* after the riots, Young points out two issues that are in need of attention. First, police harassment and brutality against African Americans. In certain cases, excessive police force had resulted in serious injury or even death on the part of colored citizens. The second reason deduced from the survey is the lack of housing affordable to African Americans in Detroit. As will be discussed later in this thesis, realtors in Detroit had their own mechanism of housing segregation, denying racial and ethnic populations the opportunity to improve their living conditions by offering them house prices much higher than the whites were asked to pay. This means that regardless of the occupation and income of the buyer, since all African Americans were forced to live in Black Bottom, they were excluded from whiter, more Americanized neighborhoods. In addition, Detroit's urban renewal projects²⁰ often targeted ghettos or communities where African Americans lived, thus exposing them to serious housing shortage and confining them to extremely crowded, decrepit dwellings. Other issues that Young cites as the root of Detroit urban revolts include economic inequality between the races, lack of improvement in racial policy, as well as demographic changes in the region. Regarding economic inequality, the blacks were hit the hardest by the trend of automation and outsourcing in the automobile industry, which was responsible for the high percentage of unemployed young African American men. Furthermore, the discontentment over unemployment exacerbated as the gap in income, employment, and education between the two races were made obvious in times of economic crisis. Adding to the above three issues is the lack of change in racial policy.

²⁰ Urban renewal projects targeting Black Bottom began to take place following the inauguration of mayor Edward Jeffries in the 1940s. In 1962, the demolition of Black Bottom's Gotham Hotel marked the end of this historical African American community. For more details on Black Bottom's urban renewals, see *Detroit: The Black Bottom Community* by Jeremy Williams, pages 117-25.

Although the mayor at the time, Jerome Cavanaugh, appointed African American employees to several city posts, still, racial discrimination in Detroit had not been handled properly by the government, thus fueling revolt against racism and the police. The last cause of the 1967 riots that Young lists is demographic changes, which occurred a few years after the race riots in 1943. In 1950s, white flight had been taking place; the result of this move was a decrease in commercial establishments such as restaurants and supermarkets, and an increase in lower-end shops like pool halls, liquor stores, and pawn shops. The above reasons provided the possible conditions of what will become a race war in the 60s, as every aspect of life back then for African Americans—be it political, social, or economic—was trying to engage them into a binary battle between the blacks and the whites.

Returning to 1932 Detroit, the job Desdemona thought would be in a silk factory was really in the Silk Room of the Nation of Islam, from which she would learn a black version of *On the Origin of Species* that addressed the evolution of man in a biopolitical racist language. Founded in 1930 following the Great Migration and the Great Depression, the Nation was a black supremacist organization that would later accrue popularity through its members Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. Advocating black nationalism, antipathy toward white people, and an Islamic doctrine far different from its orthodox opposite, the Nation in *Middlesex* was rendered a hoax invented by Jimmy Zizmo (who posed as the founder W. D. Fard Muhammad) to extract money out of his believers. Via the heating grate in the Silk Room, Desdemona heard a story of origin—a counterhistory—created by Fard that designated the black people as the original race. The Nation claimed that the whites were not natural, but a product of genetic engineering which brought to life “a race of blue-eyed devils”:

Over many, many years [Yacub the black scientist] genetically changed the black man, one generation at a time, making him paler and weaker, diluting his righteousness and morality, turning him into the paths of evil. And then, my

brothers, one day Yacub was done. . . . Yacub had created the white man! Born of lies. Born of homicide. A race of blue-eyed devils. (155)

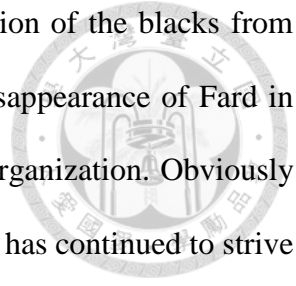
In the theology of the Nation, every other non-black race was created through genetic modification. And like the white people, as their skin color was “diluted,” so had their integrity been compromised. In the process of rupturing white mainstream discourse, the Nation, with its ingenious design, manipulated pseudo-scientific terms to authenticate a mythic story that would undermine the self-proclaimed decency, and indeed the humanity, of the whites. Again resorting to science, Fard moved on to the supposedly inferior biological makeup of white people. This time, he turned to physiology and craniometry:

Now let us make a physiological comparison between the white race and the original people. White bones, anatomically speaking, are more fragile. White blood is thinner. Whites possess roughly one-third the physical strength of blacks. . . .

What is craniometry? It is the scientific measurement of the brain, of what is called by the medical community “gray matter.” The brain of the average white man weighs six ounces. The brain of the average black man weighs seven ounces and one half. (155-56)

Playing with a mixture of quasi-truth and falsehood, the Nation fabricated its founding myth—so did all other countries—in an attempt to empower the black people and to build a black nation. Ultimately, the organization hoped to destroy the blue-eyed devils who came to “dominate the black nation through tricknology” (154). As Foucault describes, racism consists of two factors: the first is to create fissures in the biological continuum, which was demonstrated in the Nation’s invention of an evil but weaker race, whereas the second is to establish a positive relation between the self and the death of others. Regarding the latter factor, the Nation conceived of the whites as the enemy who used tricknology to persecute its racial others, and

therefore destroying the race would amount to the ultimate emancipation of the blacks from white rule. While *Middlesex*'s record of the Nation ended with the disappearance of Fard in Chicago, in reality the Nation has remained to this day an operating organization. Obviously the Nation has yet to fulfill its agenda of building a black nation, still, it has continued to strive for a new counterhistory of the black people.

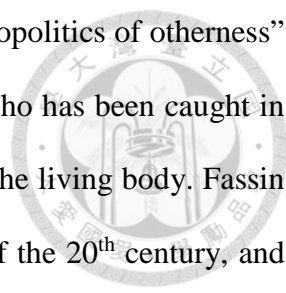


Life as an Immigrant

In addition to racism, another area of concern for scholars working on biopolitics is the issue of immigration. Although Didier Fassin rightly points out that reflections on biopolitics in the studies of Foucault barely touch upon the issue, he nevertheless finds in Foucault's analyses applicable connections that enable him to examine immigration problems in France against a "biopolitics of otherness" (4). Also drawing on Foucauldian biopolitics is Sokthan Yeng, who, by delving into the biopolitical intersections of myth, medical science, and neoliberal economy, uncovers the patterns of racism underlying U.S. immigration policies. The works of these two scholars provide the crux of the argument in this section on immigrant lives in *Middlesex*; that is, they foreground the importance of immigrant issues within a biopolitical era, and call for attention toward legally sanctioned racial discrimination in the modern, globalized world.

Fassin, in his article entitled "The Biopolitics of Otherness," extends the Foucauldian biopolitical concepts of "help to live and allow to die"²¹ and "race wars" respectively in relation

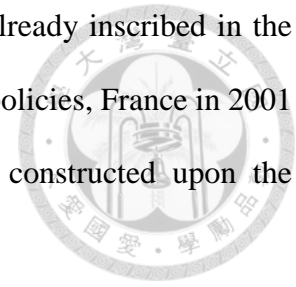
²¹ While Fassin marks *The History of Sexuality* as the source of this phrase, the idea more likely comes from *Society Must Be Defended*, in which Foucault introduces biopolitics as "the right to make live and to let die" (*le droit de faire vivre et de laisser mourir*) (241). A similar phrase in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* might be: "a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (*un pouvoir de faire vivre ou de rejeter dans la mort*), which is found in the 1978 edition published by Pantheon Books (138; emphasis in original).



to the suffering body and the racialized body to define his idea of a “biopolitics of otherness” (4). In Fassin’s formulation, this biopolitics is centered on the Other who has been caught in the new logic of immigration population management that focuses on the living body. Fassin looks into the immigration debate in France that occurred at the end of the 20th century, and finds amidst the society a sudden increase of awareness toward undocumented foreigners (*sans-papiers*, literally “without documents”),²² as well as a heightened attention to racial discrimination (3). With the enforcement of stricter administrative measures and immigration policies over the years, it became less and less probable for undocumented foreigners to secure a residence permit. The phenomenon thereby accentuates the importance of the “*suffering body*” in need of medical care, exhibiting a humanitarian commitment of the right to life and providing a fast track to receiving legal status (3; emphasis in original). Contrastingly, Fassin’s other form of body—the “*racialized body*”—denotes the “most illegitimate object of social differentiation” (3; emphasis in original). The French public used to acknowledge only national and cultural differences regarding their heterogeneous population; however, as the society enters the millennium, nature has become a third category that constitutes a fundamental difference between the society and its Other. The two types of bodies, Fassin suggests, display two opposing directions of immigrant management: “the legitimacy of the *suffering body* proposed in the name of a common humanity is opposed to the illegitimacy of the *racialized body*, promulgated in the name of insurmountable difference” (4; emphasis in original). The former represents an extreme reduction of the social into the biological, for the body in pain now becomes the anchor to which human values and morality are tied; the latter, in contrast, is an inversion of the suffering body. It is a reduction of the biological to the social, one whose

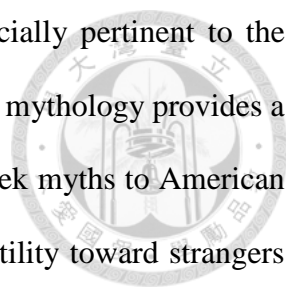
²² As Fassin explains, in the 1990s the French society became aware of the fact that these populations formerly perceived as foreign “illegal workers” had entered the country legally, but failed to qualify for a residence permit during their stay. These *sans-papiers* included “wives or children who had joined husbands or fathers, themselves legal residents for years, young people who had come as children and been prosecuted for petty crimes in adolescence, students who had had to abandon their studies after failing exams, and asylum-seekers whose claims had been rejected” (4).

racial difference is “insurmountable” as it is the “marks of origins” already inscribed in the body (5).²³ Either way, for Fassin, ensuing the debate on immigration policies, France in 2001 was embracing a new kind of politics—a biopolitics of otherness constructed upon the pathologically and racially marked body of the immigrant Other.



Despite the fact that Fassin’s observations are based on a French society and therefore is not immediately evocative of the American outlook in *Middlesex*, it nevertheless presents a contemporary management of the Other population that bridges the gap between Foucauldian biopolitics and immigrant concerns. Along with the theoretical ground provided by Fassin for analyzing *Middlesex*, another biopolitical perspective found in *The Biopolitics of Race* further facilitates the reading of immigrant lives in the novel. Examining state racism and U.S. immigration policies, Yeng shows how categories of identity—sex, sexuality, gender, etc.—are constructed under modern forms of racism obscured by economic discourse in a neoliberal state. What state racism relies on is the neoliberal economic logic of cost and benefit: those immigrant populations deemed beneficial to the state will be sanctioned by laws, otherwise, they are subject to discrimination. Through this connection of the worthiness of a certain people with the wellness of the nation, Yeng sees similarities between Foucauldian history of sexuality and U.S. immigration history: both maintain a dynamic definition of what is considered a social threat, express “anxieties about homogeneity,” relate the health of the individual to that of the state, and direct arguments on these issues to the nation’s welfare (43). In short, following the Foucauldian maxim that “society must be defended” from biological dangers for it to prosper, topics of biopolitics and racism cannot be isolated from discussions about immigration regulations.

²³ Noting the use of the word “race,” Fassin makes clear that “‘race’ obviously does not designate a biological or physical reality, but refers to a social construct based on the recognition of a biological or physical foundation of difference and produced in a historical context of economic and political domination” (4, n.10). In other words, “race” for Fassin is by no means a biological given whose existence can be taken for granted, but a construct that deploys and hierarchizes biologically-based differences to ensure the authority of dominant groups.



An important point of view in Yeng's studies, which is especially pertinent to the concern of this section, is how the idea of a "pure race" rooted in Greek mythology provides a philosophical foundation for American myths. Comparing Ancient Greek myths to American mythology, Yeng proposes that whereas the former displays sheer hostility toward strangers whose country of birth and nationality are foreign to the land,²⁴ the latter myth with its immigrant past tends to embrace its disciples, welcoming everyone into its territory. While it may seem that the Ancient Greek doctrine of an autochthonous origin indicates the notion of a "pure race" that sharply contrasts with American folklore, according to Yeng, these myths in fact share the same function—to establish their community as the "epicenter of 'goodness'" (3, 4). In Greek myths, goodness is characterized by a connection to the land, for the person needs to "be born of a Greek citizen and be born on Greek soil to be considered part of the Greek race" (5), whereas in the American version, the meaning of a good citizen no longer depends upon its relation to geography and land. For America's newcomers whose founding myth was essentially an immigrant history, to establish themselves as a civilized race required that they emphasize the "transportability of civilization" (6). In other words, to prove themselves as a race far more superior to the Native Americans and Africans in order to lay claim to the land, they must accentuate their European industriousness and productivity—good qualities that uncivilized races did not possess. Since the goodness of the race is defined through the production of a "raced other" exemplified by figures of "the stranger, the foreigner, and the immigrant," myths are created to demarcate the good race from its inferior Other (2). In modern societies, this need to differentiate and to hierarchize, Yeng argues, bespeaks a fear of dissolution and a nostalgic longing for the lost, ideal community. As immigrant population grows, anxiety over the potentially socially-disruptive outsider results in the search for a

²⁴ Mythological examples provided by Yeng include the Greek claim that its citizens "grew like plants from seeds sown by the virgin Athena," and the revelation in Euripides' *Ion* of the Greek ancestry of one of their influential leaders (3).

“cohesive social fabric,” which is manifested in the racist claims found not only in myths, but also in scientific theories and neoliberal economic discourses. Here the term “racism,” in a sense similar to Fassin’s, is not an *a priori* knowledge with stable meaning or divisions; rather, racial taxonomy differs according to geographical distribution, mental capacities, genetic attributes, as well as other biological, cultural, and identity indicators (2). Centered upon themes of “otherness” and “belonging” (2), American myths have incarnated into present neoliberal ideology, which imposes racial discourses upon immigration legislation to create the Other population as a biopolitical category bearable only for the benefits it provides.

Yeng’s contrast between a xenophobic Greece and a welcoming America is coincidentally inverted into an immigrant family saga in *Middlesex*. Whereas the Stephanideses work their way into an all-inclusive American society, the country in turn responds with a tightened biopolitical control deeply embedded in racism. To uncover the intersections between such racism and immigrant status, this section will investigate *Middlesex* following Fassin’s and Yeng’s perspectives on Foucauldian biopolitics. Drawing on biopolitical administration pertaining to immigrant populations, this section will discuss three main topics: the perfunctory quarantine checks conducted for disease prevention, the implementation of domestic sanitary and hygiene standards, and the housing discrimination against and segregation of other races as protection for the purity of Americanness. Guided by a biopolitical logic, these mechanisms are deployed to defend the society against health threats and to foster life for the prosperity of the nation.

As depicted in *Middlesex*, immigrants entering the U.S. must undergo quarantine procedures conducted by health inspectors, yet these checks were cursory at best. The inspectors looked into the immigrants’ “eyes and ears, rubbed their scalps, and flipped their eyelids inside out with buttonhooks,” and afterwards, marked the sick or abnormal body with chalk: *X* for the potentially infectious, *Pg* for the pregnant, *H* for heart problems, *C* for

conjunctivitis, *F* for favus, and *T* for trachoma (*Middlesex* 81). The procedures here sarcastically evoke a scene involving livestock waiting to be certified as healthy enough to be eligible for sale, or in a more extreme sense, a mock health check on slave ships that implies a restage of the import of racialized labor force across the Atlantic. Besides mandatory quarantine inspections, immigrants were also required to conform to an Americanized idea of a good citizen, and to avoid or hide away any characteristic that may relegate them to an undesirable category. As Cal writes, on the ship *Giulia* in 1922,

passengers discussed how to escape the categories. In nervous cram sessions, illiterates learned to pretend to read; bigamists to admit to only one wife; anarchists to deny having read Proudhon; heart patients to simulate vigor; epileptics to deny their fits; and carriers of hereditary diseases to neglect mentioning them. My grandparents, unaware of their genetic mutation, concentrated on the more blatant disqualifications. Another category of restriction: “persons convicted of a crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.” And a subset of this group: “Incestuous relations.” (73-74)

While the authoritative “medical eyes” detected neither a recessive mutation on the fifth chromosome nor Lefty and Desdemona’s consanguineous marriage, populations seeking a new life and a new identity in the States nevertheless had to follow a set of rules so that the “fabric” of the American race can be protected (81). Among the categories the immigrants were trying to escape from, one is informed of certain guidelines for being recognized as a proper American citizen: the person has to be literate, monogamist, law-abiding, moral, and healthy without hereditary diseases. These guidelines, as well as the enforcement of strict immigrant laws, were the outcome of two racist discourses that came into shape around the beginning of the 20th

century. The first was the Immigration Restriction League established in Boston, 1894.²⁵ The organization lobbied for the limitation of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, citing racist, nativist, and eugenicist claims, while also advocating literacy tests for fear that an influx of the poor, illiterate “new immigration” would become a liability of the nation (Blume 173). Two decades after the League’s proposal associating southern and eastern Europeans with “vice, dirtiness, prostitution, poverty, backwardness, and disease” had been vetoed, the Immigration Act of 1917 carried on its racist aspiration (Brunnbauer 128). In addition to discriminating against parts of Asian and European regions,²⁶ the Act listed thirty-three types of “undesirables” who must be barred from immigration to the States.²⁷ Viewed in this light, Lefty and Desdemona, who fell under the undesirable categories of the illiterate, the physically-defective, and the morally-deprived, had entered the country stealthily like how the mutant gene was carried across the ocean.

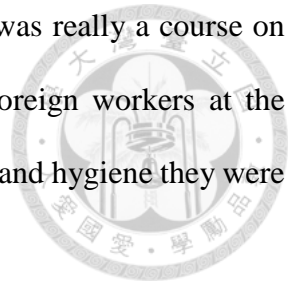
After settling in Fordist Detroit, Lefty secured a job at the Ford Motor Company with the help of cousin Sourmelina’s husband, Jimmy Zizmo. As a new comer to the nation, Lefty had to take lessons at the Ford English School after work and pass a test to prove himself a

²⁵ The League was concerned with immigrant laws and the future of the nation, asking, “Do we want this country to be peopled by British, German, and Scandinavian stock, historically free, energetic, progressive, or by Slav, Latin, and Asiatic races, historically down-trodden, atavistic, and stagnant?” (Hall 395).

²⁶ The Act established an “Asiatic Barred Zone” that covered almost all of eastern and southern Asia, banning people living in the regions from immigrating to the United States. On the other hand, eastern and southern Europeans were also discriminated against, especially the so-called new immigrants, most of whom were Catholic and Jewish, and had a lower literacy rate than populations in other parts of Europe (Gerstle 96-97). As the major advocate of the bill, Republican Senator William P. Dillingham of Vermont was explicit in his racist tendency. According to Gary Gerstle in *American Crucible*, Dillingham admitted that he became an avid supporter of the literacy test after he found out that the test would greatly reduce the number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, while those from northern and western Europe would not be affected (97).

²⁷ The thirty-three kinds of people excluded by the U.S. Immigration Act of 1917 included: “all idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons; persons who have had one or more attacks of insanity at any time previously; persons of constitutional psychopathic inferiority; persons with chronic alcoholism; paupers; professional beggars; vagrants; persons afflicted with tuberculosis in any form or with a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease; persons not comprehended within any of the foregoing excluded classes who are found to be and are certified by the examining surgeon as being *mentally or physically defective, such physical defect being of a nature which may affect the ability of such alien to earn a living*; persons who have been convicted of or admit having committed a felony or other crime or *misdemeanor involving moral turpitude*; polygamists, or persons who practice polygamy or believe in or advocate the practice of polygamy; anarchists, or persons who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States” (qtd. in Simkin; emphasis added).

qualified employee. What appeared to be an English language course was really a course on Americanization in disguise. During class, Lefty, along with other foreign workers at the factory, would recite like choir boys the American standards of sanitary and hygiene they were required to obey:



“Employees should use plenty of soap and water in the home.

“Nothing makes for right living so much as cleanliness.

“Do not spit on the floor of the home.

“Do not allow any flies in the house.

“The most advanced people are the cleanest.” (97)

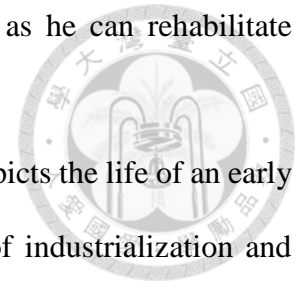
Such biopolitical constitution of a clean and healthy body was part and parcel of the nation’s scheme to increase productivity. These immigrant workers, being racially and ethnically diverse, were accepted to pass through the gateway to America only under the condition that they prove themselves to be useful, docile, and assimilable. In *Middlesex*, the mechanism implemented to ensure an endless succession of productive labor bodies was most distinct in the Ford factory’s management of its employees. An example of how both the personal and the domestic were infiltrated by biopower, the conversation below shows two men of the Ford Sociological Department addressing the factory’s new immigrant worker, Lefty:

“Management has foreseen,” the short one seamlessly continued, “that five dollars a day in the hands of some men might work a tremendous handicap along the paths of rectitude and right living and might make of them a menace to society in general.”

“So it was established by Mr. Ford”—the taller one again took over—“that no man is to receive the money who cannot use it advisedly and conservatively.”

“Also”—the short one again—“that where a man seems to qualify under the plan and later develops weaknesses, that it is within the province of the company

to take away his share of the profits until such time as he can rehabilitate himself.” (100)



Referring specifically to Ford’s Five Dollar Day,²⁸ the conversation depicts the life of an early immigrant worker that has been captured entirely by the discourse of industrialization and standardization, manifesting Henry Ford’s imperative at manufacturing good citizens for the nation like manufacturing cars. From control over mortgage acquisition, shower frequency, the right way to brush teeth, to kitchen hygiene and eating habits, through the hands of Ford, or on a larger scale, the interventions of the U.S. government, upon disembarking at Ellis Island, immigrants were immediately subjected to the ongoing and constant process of assimilation aimed at “making Americans out of foreigners” (Bates 26). And these assimilatory acts, apparently, were based on the racist premise that immigrants belonging to a biologically-inferior race, or an Other race must also be morally-depraved, and therefore needed to be rectified mentally and physically. This association of immigrant with deficiency and inferiority was also evident in later years following the Stephanides’ white flight out of Detroit.

When the Stephanides house was burned down in the 1967 Detroit race riots (like a “Second American Revolution”) (248), the family decided to move to the affluent suburban area, Grosse Pointe, after receiving insurance money for the fire. As Cal’s parents Milton and Tessie was looking for a house, they found out that all the houses they had their eye on were either sold, doubled in price, or suddenly unavailable. As mentioned before, one of the reasons that led to those series of race riots in Detroit was due to a housing segregation system. Being white Detroiters (and second- and third-generation immigrants), the Stephanides should be exempt from racial discrimination of the sort; still, with their ethnic ties to a Greek tradition,

²⁸ In *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford*, Beth Tompkins Bates writes that the Fordist ambition to make Americans out of foreigners was immediately connected to emphases on “cleanness, housing stock, and personal habits” (25-26). According to Ford, foreign employees could receive the exorbitant salary of five dollars a day only if they conform to his standards of conduct. He declares, “These men of many nations must be taught American ways, the English language, the right way to live,” and if they live “correctly . . . we can make them good citizens” (26).

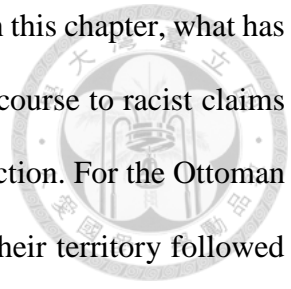
they failed to blend in. Back then in Detroit, realtors used a point system to grade prospective buyers to protect their affluent, white neighborhoods from outside threats.²⁹ When realtor Miss Marsh meets the Stephanides, she thinks to herself:

Let's see. Southern Mediterranean. One point. Not in one of the professions. One point. Religion? Greek church. That's some kind of Catholic, isn't it? So there's another point there. And he has his parents living with him! Two more points! Which makes—five! Oh, that won't do. That won't do at all. (255; italics in original)

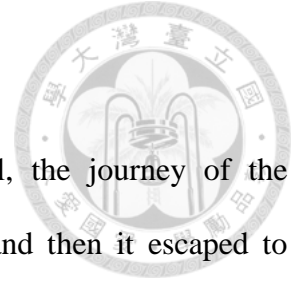
While the system appears on first sight to be a harmless selection process for the search of suitable residents in the community (as Cal notes, “Milton wasn’t the only one who worried about the neighborhood going to hell”) (255-56), it actually displays explicit discriminations against ethnic, racial, occupational, religious, and cultural differences. The system splits populations into binary categories: native Americans/non-native Americans, Americanized/not Americanized, of a decent origin/without a decent origin, etc. Indeed, the list could go on and on, since racism is fundamentally a never-ending production of oppositions and struggles that pits one race against the other in a contest for survival. As Cal puts it sarcastically, “[n]ow that white flight had begun, the Point System was more important than ever. You didn’t want what was happening in Detroit to happen out here” (256). What had happened in Detroit was a war between races, and it was a war inflicted primarily by worsening racism, the exact ideology that gave rise to the point system in 1945 which, since its implementation, had been fueling race riots with discrimination and housing segregation.

²⁹ As Stephen Richard Higley explains, it was a screening system that began in 1945, which required real estate brokers to submit the name of the potential buyer to the Grosse Pointe Property Owners Association. The Association would then hire a private detective to fill out an investigative questionnaire. The questionnaire, after completion, was sent back to the brokers to count its final score, and then again sent to the Association. Higley points out, “[o]ut of a maximum of 100 points, a passing grade was based on a sliding scale for different nationalities; ‘Poles would pass with 55 points, Southern Europeans with 75, Jews with 85.’ Negroes and ‘Orientals’ were not even eligible; their disqualification was automatic” (42). For details on the questionnaire, please see Higley 41-42.

Given the biopolitical analysis on racism and immigrant issues in this chapter, what has been revealed is that, in times of crisis, nations and societies tend to recourse to racist claims hoping for a final resolution that would salvage themselves from destruction. For the Ottoman Empire and for the United States alike, an inclusion of strangers into their territory followed by an exclusion facilitates the national project of prosperity. Drawing upon a racist discourse, the process results in a double advantage—through purification, it sanitizes the society and keeps it in a healthy state, and by keeping out unproductive foreigners, it ensures the cohesion of the social fabric. This blatant cause-effect relationship between racism and national welfare is dangerous yet convenient, notorious yet convincing. In *Middlesex* as well as in contemporary states, it is exactly this dubious linkage that not only the immigrant Stephanides family but every human subject must strive to disengage. After all, in a biopolitical era, no individual can be liberated from categorical hierarchies, for every form of being, every process of life is now at the disposal of a discourse that kills in the name of the people.



Conclusion: A Return to Middlesex



As the reader follows Cal's narrative throughout the novel, the journey of the Stephanides family gene began centuries ago on Mount Olympus, and then it escaped to Smyrna, sailed across the Atlantic, matured in Detroit, exhibited in San Francisco, and eventually settled in Berlin. Like the Byzantine missionaries who smuggled Princess Si Ling-chi's silk worms out of China more than a thousand years ago, Cal identifies himself as "the descendant of a smuggling operation" that perpetuated a recessive gene (71). This inherited guilt, coupled with his American upbringing and self-taught cosmopolitanism, serves as the source of his ambivalence toward his genetic heredity and cultural heritage. With Milton's death and the return of Cal to their house in Middlesex after a year in the Sixty-Niners, a solution to the ambivalence is suggested as the teenage Cal comes to the realization that, for him to become a man, he must first occupy the position of "The Man":

When I was little, street-corner dudes like that would sometimes lower their shades to wink, keen on getting a rise out of the white girl in the backseat passing by. But now the dude gave me a different look altogether. He didn't lower his sunglasses, but his mouth, his flared nostrils, and the tilt of his head communicated defiance and even hate. That was when I realized a shocking thing. I couldn't become a man without becoming *The Man*. Even if I didn't want to. (518; emphasis added)

According to Hsu, the passage signals a pivotal transformation on two grounds, namely, the trading of Callie's narrative perspective for Cal's, and the reversal of power relations in terms of race and sex ("Ethnicity" 100). No longer the white immigrant girl in the backseat of a car, now Cal has become The Man, the figure indicating the white bourgeois male's ascendancy over the Other race. Cal "The Man" has come to occupy a normative, dominant position in

contrast to Callie's marginalized one that places her within the categories of people of color, immigrants, and women (101). The transition, in this case, denotes a successful biopolitical management of both the ambiguous intersexual body and the immigrant population that Cal exemplifies. Since the narrator Cal, writing now at the age of forty-one, seems to reside comfortably in the body of The Man and works as an American cultural ambassador in post-unification Berlin, he might as well be a fitting exemplar of contemporary biopolitical technologies: namely, the mechanisms that make live and let die while also allowing for minor under-the-table revolts. For the biopolitical regime, temporary deviance is tolerated as long as the unruly subject is rehabilitated and remains committed to the cause of the nation's wellbeing, or in the case of Cal, to eventually become a productive white man normalized both in terms of gender and sexuality.

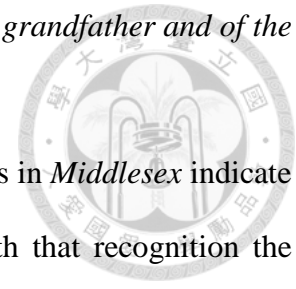
While the realization of becoming The Man seems to imply a discouraging status quo on Cal's part, near the end of *Middlesex*, Eugenides nevertheless fulfills the promise of the "middle" by once again emphasizing the ambivalence and the transgressive potentiality of the protagonist.³⁰ In the closing paragraphs of the novel, Cal narrates his recognition of his Greek heritage and stands in as "the man" of the house after his father Milton's funeral:

And so it was I who, upholding an old Greek custom no one remembered anymore, stayed behind on Middlesex, blocking the door, so that Milton's spirit wouldn't reenter the house. *It was always a man who did this, and now I qualified. . . .*

On Middlesex, I remained in the front doorway. I took my duty seriously and didn't budge, despite the freezing wind. . . . The wind swept over the crusted

³⁰ I would like to thank my advisor and my oral examiners for urging me to see beyond the blind spots in my analysis of the novel's conclusion, and reminding me that for Cal to be a figure of resistance against biopower, he does not have to *act* transgressive, for he himself *is* that transgression.

snow into my Byzantine face, which was *the face of my grandfather and of the American girl I had once been*. (529; emphasis added)



As Chu argues in the article “D(Na) Coding the Ethnic,” these last lines in *Middlesex* indicate that Cal finds himself qualified for the place of “the man,” and with that recognition the ultimate character of the immigrant saga emerges—the first-generation immigrant grandfather and the American girl that inherited his genetic legacy (282). In Chu’s reading of *Middlesex*, what should have been the reassuring caesura for Cal—the “new type of human being, who would inhabit a new world” (529)—is confronted by a disturbing fact: that both the grandfather and the girl are white. She then maintains that culminating in these final passages are the “revival of white ethnicity” and the “white ethnic freedom from racial determinism” (282), in which issues of racism and immigrant control coalesce into what appears a successful white ethnic narrative. This anti-climactic, reactionary reading may be a convincing analysis, since Cal does seem to be a white bourgeois male dwelling in the comfort zone of his own political apathy and conservatism; however, it should also be addressed that Cal has indeed arrived at a middle-sexed identity and leads a middle-grounded life. Although Cal is by no means a militant political activist who flaunts and displays his intersex queerness as a weapon against a normative authority, he lives a “stealth” life that may not appear transgressive,³¹ but is definitely subversive. On the surface, Cal strives to pass as a heterosexual white man with a politically-correct job title and a cosmopolitan belief, yet beneath all his masculine façade, he is still that in-between figure with female genitalia, “feminine” dispositions, and a Greek heritage. Standing on the threshold of *Middlesex* and blocking the entrance, Cal accedes to the position as the man of the Greek house, albeit an ambivalent one: he embodies, on the one hand, the Greek tradition that reared the beautiful Hermaphroditus, and on the other, the American

³¹ According to Hsu, the term “stealth” is commonly used by “transgender and intersexed communities to describe individuals who do not publicly disclose the fact of their gender transition” (87). For Hsu, Cal’s stealth identity is the result of a “categorical miscegenation” of ethnicity, race, and sexuality produced by the “biological miscegenation” of his intersexual body (98).

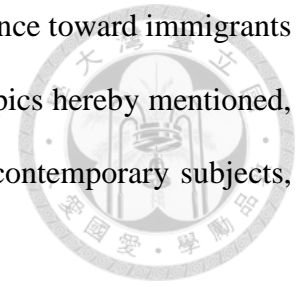
culture into which he is born but also to which he will always remain foreign.³² Through a juxtaposition of the faces of the immigrant grandfather and the American girl on Cal's "Byzantine face," Eugenides draws parallels between sexes and genders, Greek identity and American nationality, as well as an immigrant past and a multicultural present. Converging and accommodating these differences, Cal has indeed become the embodiment of transgression.

In light of the narrative achievement of *Middlesex*, as well as its construction of and strategy toward racial and immigrant populations, this thesis investigates issues of nonconforming bodies and biological racism against a biopolitical backdrop. Drawing upon theories of Foucault and Agamben and studies expanding on their thoughts, this thesis argues that *Middlesex*, through the immigrant saga it depicts, parallels a family history with the mechanisms of a biopolitical regime to expose the underlying workings of power upon the lives and deaths of its subjects. The examples analyzed in this thesis—the intersex and/or the freakish body, and racism as manifested through its production of bare lives and immigrants—provide ample support for exposing the hidden matrix of biopower.

Revealing the biopolitical techniques of pathologization, monsterization, utilization, and extermination addressed in *Middlesex*, this thesis hopes to contribute to the current body of works analyzing the novel. Moreover, as scholarship on *Middlesex* is still accumulating, this thesis endeavors to draw attention to a less examined area, which is that of life and death informed by modern biopower. Instead of attempting to provide an exhaustive biopolitical interpretation of the novel, this thesis is nevertheless focused on discussions that appear directly related to the matter at hand—for example, the dismissal of Cal's intersexual body to scientific monstrosity, the expulsion of the freakish bodies at the Sixty-Niners, the atrocity of racism

³² Cal recalls his years as Calliope in Baker & Inglis, a private girls' school: "'Ethnic' girls we were called, but then who wasn't, when you got right down to it? . . . Until we came to Baker & Inglis my friends and I had always felt completely American. But now the Bracelets' upturned noses suggested that there was another America to which we could never gain admittance. All of a sudden America wasn't about hamburgers and hot rods anymore. It was about the *Mayflower* and Plymouth Rock" (298).

underscored through its production of bare lives, as well as the intolerance toward immigrants exposed by models of eradication, exclusion, and assimilation. The topics hereby mentioned, along with other details in *Middlesex* regarding the physical life of contemporary subjects, invite further exploration into the biopolitical context of the novel.



In the final scene of the novel, Cal stands in the doorway of his old home, expressing his yearning to become a new person and be opened up to countless potentials: “I couldn’t help feeling, of course, that that [new type of] person was me, me and all the others like me” (529). Like the house on Middlesex that betokens for Cal a vital futurity, this thesis is written with a view to retrieve and liberate life from a biopower that is as invigorating as it is murderous. Although the discussion ends here, this thesis hopes to serve as a gateway that opens up to new interpretative possibilities, gesturing at the arrival of a new world order in which humans live as individuals instead of specimens.

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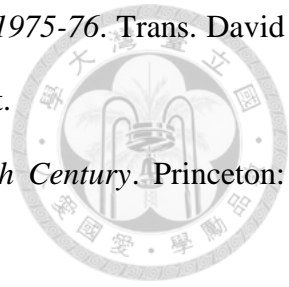
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