

Michaela Koch

Hermaphroditism and Intersexuality in the early 20th century: How a Man's Maiden Years Reinforce the Sexual Binary.

Rooted in discourse analysis, my PhD thesis deals with negotiations of the sexual binary in literary representations of intersexuality. Beginning with Herculine Barbin's *Memoirs* (written in the 1850s) up to contemporary novels like Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2002) or Thea Hillman's *Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word)* (2008) I trace the descriptions of hermaphroditism, intersexuality and the sexual binary in literary texts and their position within a web of non-literary descriptions in discourses such as medicine, psychology, or gender studies.

Currently, I'm working on a chapter on N.O. Body's *Memoirs of a Man's Maiden Years (Aus eines Mannes Mädchenjahren, 1907¹)* and would like to present an extract of my work. In a contemporary review Franziska Mann asks to analyze the *Memoirs* not for their artistic or aesthetic value but for their value for humanity.² She poses great importance on the Foreword by Rudolf Presber, a writer and publisher, and the Epilogue by Magnus Hirschfeld, a sexologist who served as expert witness for N.O. Body's case before court. Hirschfeld and his colleague Iwan Bloch who served as expert before court as well, both discuss the *Memoirs* in their works on hermaphroditism. I will read N.O. Body's text in the context of Hirschfeld's theory of intermediary sexes and argue that the narrative reinforces rather than challenges the binary that his body is said to defy. Nevertheless, the discursive situation surrounding the text exemplifies the entangled perspectives on hermaphroditism and the sexual binary.

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¹ The *Memoirs* went through at least six editions and two films were produced based on the text (1912 and 1919, cf. Simon). The *Memoirs* were re-published in Germany in 1993 by Hermann Simon (Berlin: Edition Hetrich) who also identified N.O. Body as Karl M. Baer, a German Jew who died in 1956. The text was published in English in 2006 (University of Pennsylvania Press).

² Cf. Mann, Franziska. Review "Aus eines Mannes Mädchenjahren." *Frauen-Rundschau: Offizielles Organ deutscher Frauenverbände und -Vereine* 8 (1907): 493-4.