

Barbin constantly alludes to the fact that ze is different from other girls, this is despite the fact that the Barbin of the narration doesn't know that ze is a hermaphrodite yet (of course, the Barbin writing does know this).

In what is a common trope of autobiography, Barbin declares that hir memoir is stranger than fiction:

'When I return to this distant past, I believe myself dreaming!!! Only memories of this sort crowd my imagination!!! If I were to write a novel, I could, on interrogating these memories, provide more dramatic and striking pages than were ever created by an A. Dumas, a Paul Féval!!!'

This 'explicitly situate[s] his/her narrative in relation to the novelistic tradition' (Wing 2004: 110). Barbin uses prosopopoeia and part of her inspiration is 'Rousseau's Confessions – with which Barbin would almost certainly have been acquainted, for s/he was well-read in both Classical and French literature – the narrator proclaims her/his sincerity and attempts to communicate a sentimental truth from a position of [...] paranoia' (Tidd 2000: 77). Barbin cannot possibly communicate the 'truth', not least because the narrating Abel inserts himself into Camille's story: 'Her/his literary anxiety acts as a metaphor for her/his anxiety over sexual identity and potency, as literary form mimes the autobiographical subject's ambiguous corporeal morphology, thereby observing the common autobiographical trope of conflating textual body with authorial self' (ibid.). Barbin places hir masculine self in the text in times before ze knew ze was 'really' male: 'when s/he recounts stories of hir desire, modesty about hir body, or erotic feelings for other girls or vague sensations or amorphous desire, Alexina also lays the weight of his masculine assignment onto the past' (Holmes 2008: 87). [Link to blog post 4 – moments when 'Abel's' voice can be heard].

References:

Holmes, Morgan. 2008. *Intersex: A Perilous Difference* (Rosemont Printing and Publishing Corp.)

Tidd, Ursula. 'Bodily Dissymmetries and Masculine Anxiety: Herculine Has the Last Laugh' in *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*, ed. Avril Horner and Angela Keane, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 75 – 84

Wing, Nathaniel. 2004. *Between Genders: Narrating Difference in Early French Modernism* (Cranbury (NJ), London and Ontario: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp.)