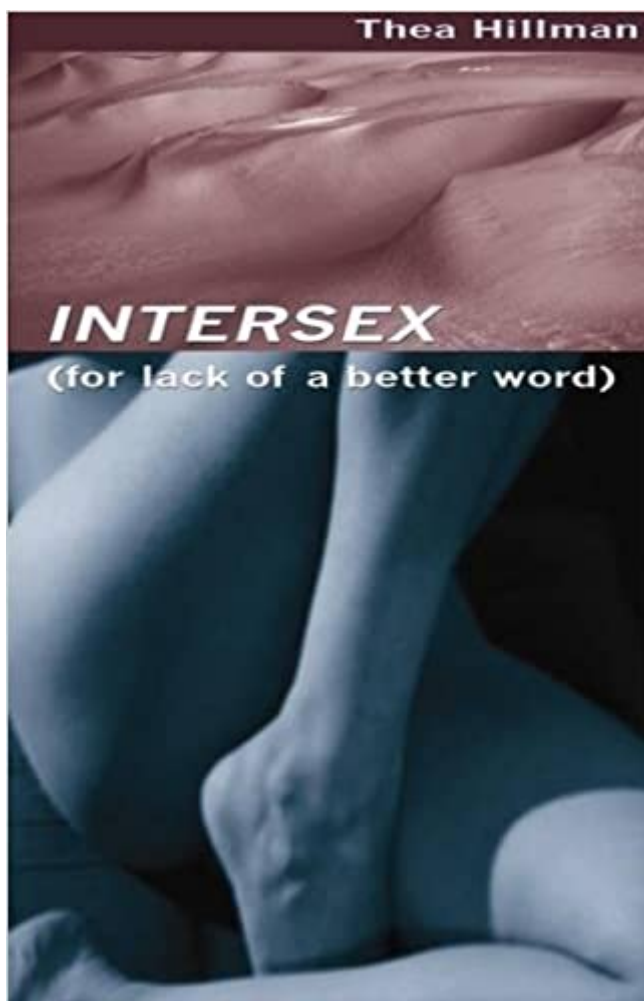


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# Intersex (For Lack Of A Better Word)



## Synopsis

"In Hillman's world, the surer you become about who you are, the more vulnerable you get." • The San Francisco Bay Guardian "Hillman's writing is sexy because it's smart and refuses to simplify things." • Fabula Magazine "Hillman's utterly unabashed memoir... showcases both the personal, embodied realities of intersex, and the social and political milieus that shape them... Intersex, too, is gorgeously written." • Women's Review of Books "It's utterly impossible to not be spellbound by performer-activist Thea Hillman, in person or in print ... A must-read." • Curve "There's nothing else in print like this amazing and courageous book." • Patrick Califia, author of Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism "An important and wonderfully disarming book. Poetic, political, and deeply personal." • Beth Lisick, author of Helping Me Help Myself Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word) chronicles one person's search for self in a world obsessed with normal. What is "intersex"? According to the Intersex Society of North America, the word describes someone born with sex chromosomes, genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that are neither clearly male nor clearly female. In first-person prose as intimate as a diary, Thea Hillman redefines memoir in a series of compelling stories that take a no-holds-barred look at sex, gender, family, and community. Whether she's pondering quirky family tendencies (Drag), reflecting on "queerness" (Another), or recounting scintillating adventures in San Francisco's sex clubs, Hillman's brave and fierce vision for cultural and societal change shines through. According to a special report by the Traditional Values Coalition entitled "Homosexual Urban Myth," award-winning writer Thea Hillman is a radical who conducts erotic readings to promote the "homosexual revolution." • Thea offers presentations about sex and gender and performs her work at colleges and festivals around the country. She lives in Oakland, California.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

According to a special report by the Traditional Values Coalition entitled "Homosexual Urban Myth," Thea Hillman is a radical who conducts erotic readings to promote the "homosexual revolution." She frequently does presentations about sex and gender at colleges, conferences, and festivals throughout the US.

Fantastic read, highly recommend.

It was an okay read. There were parts of this book that I thought might need to be re-edited, but give it a shot to read it yourself.

Didn't even bother finishing it. Added no value to the discussion or understanding of intersex. More focused on shock value than emotional exploration.

It is a very graphic book that I was required to purchase for a Gender Studies class.

As a sexuality educator, I have some familiarity with the world of intersex people. I have loved them, cried with them, rejoiced with them, mourned their death, and heard many of their deepest stories. When I read this book, my heart cried, and I learned a lot more than my text books tell me about gender identity. I probably met Thea Hillman in San Francisco in the early 90's, we seem to have attended a few of the same events, but I have no specific recollection of her. Now I feel I know her well. She bares her soul in the many chapters of this (sort of) diary. She speaks of her experiences as a young child, being diagnosed with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, and what that experience meant to a four-year-old girl who was growing pubic hairs, a child who was poked and examined by many doctors, and had a total lack of personal privacy of her body. She comes back to this experience many times in the stories she tells of her life as a person who does not really know what gender she is. She speaks about her "outwardly simple though visually misleading, internally

complicated gender." She speaks of her mother's prayers that she would be normal. She speaks of normal this way: "I take the war on terror personally because the war on terror is really a war on difference, because my body strikes terror in the hearts of other Americans." "My body and the bodies of the people I love are the most intimate sites of American imperialism. Because our sex anatomy isn't normal, they operate on us without our consent. Because who we have sex with isn't normal, they won't let us get married. Because our gender isn't normal, they don't give us jobs, health care, or housing. We work, we pay rent, we pay taxes, but because we're not normal, we don't get the same freedoms other Americans enjoy, the same freedoms American soldiers are murdering to protect." "Normal is a weapon of mass destruction. It's just as deadly, and just like those weapons, it'll never be found." Thea has served on the Board of Mills College and as the Board Chair of the Intersex Society of North America and been a spokesperson for the Intersex community, yet she says: "When it comes to talking about trans and queer community, there are a whole bunch of things I can't say. In fact, it's much easier to think about what I can't say than what I want to say. Things I can't say because I will piss someone off: no generalizations, of course, about anything, but specifically, and most dangerously, no generalizations about transmen, transwomen, butches, femmes, genderqueers, or intersex people." "I fear that regardless of the fact that I've been hormonally altered since age six in order to achieve and maintain a mythical gender ideal, I can't safely talk about my concerns about hormones and surgery in our community for fear of being seen as anti-trans and anti-surgery." Thankfully, she manages to cover all these areas in her many short chapters, mostly from a very intensely personal perspective, using the "I" voice. She talks frankly and specifically about sex, her feelings and her behavior. She speaks of lovers and hot partners and really interesting parties, but all from the perspective of one who does not clearly know what she/he is all about internally. The gender identity confusion comes through in many ways. She is also able to share with us some of the experiences of people in her life. We become, if we choose, one of her intimate friends. This is the book for anyone who is interested in Intersex as an educational or therapeutic topic, is gender curious, is gender confused or just likes to see what a talented writer can do with such a personal subject. The far right calls her a radical who promotes the "homosexual revolution." I call her courageous.

I found this book at a local library, read the entire thing... and as an intersex person, this book only depressed me further, and made what little hope I had managed to scrounge up from the pit of my soul, about who I am, completely dissipate. I do not recommend this book for anyone looking for hope that they could be loved, or that they are normal, or for anyone who is very much not

interested in the ridiculous gender politics of the day. If you have ANY amount of gender dysphoria, DO NOT READ THIS BOOK. It'll be on you if you don't heed this warning. I know how it feels, all too well, for everyone around me to treat me like a freak, and to feel like one- nay, believe I was one- for decades. I also know how it feels to be scared and ashamed of your own body, but I also know that having sex with someone who doesn't understand is not the way to heal this emotional pain. This book is autobiography, so if you came to it looking for hope, look elsewhere.

Thea's newest book is breathtaking, brutally honest and completely awe inspiring. Once I picked it up I couldn't put it down. The pieces in this book all come together to create the kind of brilliance that fills me up. It's so hard to present ourselves as whole, complex, complete people and Thea Hillman does this in one of the smartest ways I've seen. I've been telling everyone I know to buy this book. This is the kind of book that all the queers should be reading and many probably are. I think everyone should read *Intersex: For Lack of A Better Word* including my mom, my sister, my co-workers, lovers and friends. In short, Thea Hillman is brilliant!

This is an amazing. It is so honest, raw, and heartfelt. All the stories were not only real but poetic. I learned a lot about *Intersex*, but the lessons taught were not heavy handed. It was a very enjoyable read.

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