*Man Into Woman*: Scene Collation Rationale

**“The Non-Binary Perception of Gender Identity”**

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After being invited to create a scene collation for the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive*, we decided that the theme most interesting to us would be gender identity and its separation from congenital determinants of sex. Whereas gender was seen as biological, medical, and congenital (binary), we chose to collate scenes wherein gender was determined by more cultural means, such as gender performance (non-binary). By non-binary, we are referring to a departure from the traditional binary sexes rather than the non-binary gender identity. For example, instead of relying on biological attributes (i.e. one’s genitalia) to conflate gender identity with sex, we looked to scenes in which Lili’s gender identity was perceived by cultural elements, such as her mannerisms, performative actions, and internal thought processes.

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| **Terms**: Biological, medical, congenital | **Terms**: Cultural |
| * Traditional binary concept of sex. * In reference to congenital determinants like genitalia or “sex glands.” * Terms with more of an emphasis on the congenital aspects of one’s physical appearance. | * Non-binary concept of gender identity. * In reference to more cultural concepts of gender identity, such as one’s mannerisms, performative actions, societally-viewed roles of men and women, and internal thought processes. |

To do so, we examined and collated various scenes of German Typescript, German, Danish, and American editions of *Man Into Woman.* Often viewed as a trans narrative, the novel examines the life of Lili Elbe, and the subsequent questions of gender identity as Lili undergoes genital transformation surgery, now called gender confirmation surgery. This narrative necessitates an understanding of past and present concepts of gender, and it helps us see the historical emergence of a non-binary concept of identity. Since we’re not taking a binary view of gender identity we have not chosen the medical surgeries she underwent as the main focus of this collation. The more interesting concepts for us are the ways gender is culturally perceived.

Some of the most important scenes during the period of Lili’s transition are those in which no surgery is taking place at all; for example, the scenes wherein Lili is waiting between one of her three surgeries illustrate her own thoughts on gender identity. In between her first two surgeries we see Lili not having male genitalia, though not yet having fully-functional female “sex glands,” as they were referred to at the time. This left her straddling the biological line between male and female. However, in spite of the absence of biological determinants (as she no longer had testicles or ovaries), Lili’s womanhood and perception of her own femininity showed elsewhere. It is seen when she says her “flighty personality” was “It was really my character, untroubled, carefree, illogical, capricious.” (a1c18d01p06). A “flighty” personality was typically viewed as a more feminine characteristic, and when Elbe asserts that this has ​*always* been a part of her personality, she is expressing that gender identity *transcends* congenital attributes. This is further seen when Lili views cigarette-smoking as a masculine activity, and thus eradicates the habit from her life as Lili, leaving it to be a habit of Andreas. Another scene saw Lili’s delight as being told that her handwriting had become “more feminine.” These scenes illustrate a perception of gender identity that is completely separate from any biological influence; they are performative, and also give readers a glimpse into how gender was determined culturally by society.

As we collated scenes to understand the perception of gender across editions, a new

question arose: Do the gendered elements of Danish and German languages impact the text’s discussion of gender identity? We found that the answer was yes, and that, when stumbling upon scenes that may be present in some editions but not others, an omission of a certain scene would be worth considering altogether. One such scene comes from the American edition’s Chapter 3, wherein Professor Kreutz tells Andreas, “Come to me in Germany. I hope I shall be able to give you a new life and a new youth.” (a1c02p028) Though this scene is present in the Danish version as well, its omission from the German Typescript indicates an interpretation of gender absent from the other two editions: that youth is indicative of femininity. The American edition came from the British and German Editions, which were transcribed from the German Typescript edition. Because of the transcription and translation history, we found it interesting to note that certain scenes found in the American version were not originally in the German typescript.

As aforementioned, the concept of youth as indicative of femininity is found throughout the American edition, as Elbe consistently refers to herself as a *young* woman, as seen in Chapter 13: *“*She felt the transformation proceeding with every new day. It was a new life. It was a new youth. It was her own youth that was seeking to liberate itself. And she lay there, believing...” (a1c13p046). The concept of youth being indicative of femininity is thus referencing a more cultural and non-binary concept of gender identity, falling into the category of cultural stereotypes surrounding gender. The absence of this scene in the German Edition and German Typescript and the presence of it in the American and Danish editions are important to understanding the varying perceptions of gender, as each ultimately result in a different reading experience, and thus offer different populations differing perceptions of Lili’s experiences.

In collating scenes that were found across each of the editions, we found one particularly

important scene in Chapter 8, wherein Lili suggests that her experience is not heteronormative: “And then, like so many sick persons who do not know what is really the matter with them, I began to procure all kinds of scientific books dealing with sexual problems. Within a short time I acquired an expert knowledge in this department, and knew many things of which the layman hardly dreams. But gradually it became clear to me that nothing which related to normal men and women could throw any light on my mysterious case.”(a1c08p038). The scene also sheds light on Lili’s self-perception, as she notes that her case is “mysterious,” and that she is one who does “not know what is really the matter with [her].” (a1c08p038). Because we see gender identity as being independent from binary sex concepts, it is crucial that we compare this scene across editions, as it gives a deeper analysis into Lili’s understanding of her own identity.

In collating scenes of *Man Into Woman* across English, Danish, and German Typescript editions, it became apparent that each edition espoused different perceptions of gender. Ultimately, our rationale looks at how gender identity has been presented as binary and unchanging throughout history, and how it has been challenged throughout *Man Into Woman*, ultimately expressing a historical emergence of a non-binary understanding of gender. The complexity of gender, as presented in ​*Man Into Woman*​, is why we think that this collation is so important; it can lead to a broader understanding of the ways culture and time impacts our understanding of gender, which is extremely important in understanding the inspiring life and story of Lili Elbe.