

Becoming a Woman in *Man into Woman*

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Abstract

This study explores gender performativity in Lili Elbe's *Man into Woman* to show the possibilities of reconstruction and transformation through the process of performing a woman. *Man into Woman* has been criticized as conventional text in representing transgender women due to its conventional transsexual life writing and the reinforcement of sexual binary. This study applies Judith Butler's theory of performativity in exploring Lili's performance of femininity through pronouns, clothing, activities, behaviors, identity, and sex reassignment surgery. I argue that the doctors' diagnosis of Andreas/Lili's desire to become a woman as an illness or abnormality can be revised through the lens of gender performativity. Although the reliance on technology in sex reassignment surgery has been criticized as reinforcing the sexist society and dehumanizing people, I argue that the use of technology in sex reassignment surgery can be helpful in performing a woman and creates new possibilities to go beyond the heteronormative limits.

Keywords: transgender, sex reassignment surgery, gender performativity, Judith Butler, *Man into Woman*

Man into Woman (1933) is a partially fictional autobiography written by Lili Elbe who was a Danish painter in Copenhagen. Lili was the very first person who underwent sex reassignment surgery during the time when the desire to be another sex is considered as mad. According to Stryker (2008), when anesthesia was discovered to produce a successful outcome in surgery in the mid-19th century, some people sought for an operation to establish their new identity as they wish but they still suffered from the medical perspective which grouped them as having mental illness because it was a condition which would allow them to have sex reassignment surgery (p. 37). Several transgender people were oppressed by being diagnosed as being mad or having mental disorder. This historical fact contributes to my study in the aspect of how Lili Elbe who wanted to become a woman was diagnosed as “a hysterical subject” (Elbe, 1933, p. 18, 100, 110), “perfectly crazy” (Elbe, 1933, p. 19), “a lunatic” (Elbe, 1933, p. 100), “imagination and hysteria” (Elbe, 1933, p. 106), “a deceased imagining” (Elbe, 1933, p.110), “hysterical crochets and whims,” “a fraud,” and “homosexual” (Elbe, 1933, p. 110).

Man into Woman was edited by Niels Hober who compiled a collection of letters and diary entries which Lili wrote before her death. The story was later translated from German into English by H. J. Stenning. The protagonist in *Man into Woman* is Andreas Sparre, who is a famous painter in Paris during the late 1920s. Andreas is asked by his wife, Grete, to dress as a woman to be a model for her painting. With Grete’s encouragement for cross-dressing, Andreas feels the repressed urge of femininity inside him. Andreas has discovered the female desire of Lili, a young woman whom Andreas believes sharing the same body with him. The more time passes, the more he feels that he can no longer share the same body with Lili. He must choose one over the other, and he wishes Lili to be the one who survives. From then on, Andreas has several consultations with specialists who diagnose his condition and inform him that he is ill. However, Andreas finally meets the doctor who promises to operate upon him so that he will have female organs as in normal women. With a lot of support from his wife, his friends, and his strong desire, Lili has been through several

operations in sex reassignment surgery to be a woman. The story ends with Lili's death after the final operation.

Literature Review

Chu and Drager (2019) contend that “trans studies need to learn to stand on its own” (p. 104) to survive. Chu suggests that trans satire has the potential to develop into a genuine, significant methodology if we write without political optimism (2019, p. 105) because “the world is too small for all our desires, and especially the political ones” (2019, p. 106). I would argue; however, that the world is never too small for our desires, even the political ones. Furthermore, it is with political optimism that trans studies will still survive because it is with hopefulness that we can see the possibilities of desires to become.

Man into Woman is studied, especially regarding the aspects of performativity and sex reassignment surgery. Caughie (2013) points out that the concept and form of transsexual writing in *Man into Woman* is more conventional in sexual and gender aspects than in *Orlando* because *Orlando* reshapes the concept of gender, historical and social context, cultural influence, nature, identity, narrative time, and temporal span of the story. I argue that, on one hand, *Man into Woman* can be read as conventional if it is compared with the modernist work such as *Orlando*. On the other hand, Lili's desire to transform by undergoing sex reassignment surgery transcends the conventional gender categories in the heteronormative society. My study applies Butler (1999)'s concept of performativity to revise what has been seen as conventional transsexual life writing such as the conventional use of pronoun, the narrative, and the metaphor.

Steinbock (2017) studies how narrative voice is important in orienting readers of Lili's life, and show how transmedial aspect of Lili's self-representations reveals how trans links many layers of cultural analysis: as a type of socially transgressive crossing, an identity over a course of life, and a unifying theme across diverse cultural forms. Caughie et al. (2018), who work on a digital edition and archive of *Man into Woman*, are concerned about the urgent need for feminist contributions in data models and gender ontologies, as well as the difficulty of developing an effective gender ontology. They argue that

visualization must portray a temporal process rather than a static moment or set of events. These studies seem promising; however, my study applies Butler (1999)'s concept of performativity to present another view for understanding more about Lili's schizophrenic condition which allows us to see the fluid nature of identity and gender, and gives new perspective to see the desire of transgender people as constructive energy. Schizophrenia can be seen as a mode of existence instead of an illness, and transgender people have the power to transcend the normative limits towards the reconstruction and transformation through performativity.

Theoretical Framework

The feminine performance of Lili in *Man into Woman* will be explored through Butler (1999)'s concept of performativity which helps to understand Andreas who performs a woman. As gender is performative and gender identity can be constructed through the repeated acts over time, one can be perceived as a woman by performing a woman. In addition, Lili's desire to perform can be seen as transformative energy rather than the imitation because there is no original gender. Heteronormative practice is also an act of copying certain traits which each gender is supposed to behave. Lili's drag performance has a subversive potential because it can blur gender boundary with slightly different imitation which reestablishes her gender identity without history and without the cultural need to conform to the socially constructed gender role. Lili's performance of drag, thus, shows gender subversion which challenges the established society for the possibilities of reconstruction.

Performing a Woman

Andreas performs a woman named Lili using different pronouns. Not only that Lili uses the pronoun "he" instead of "I" in referring to Andreas, but Andreas also uses the pronoun "she" when referring to Lili throughout the story. Caughie (2013) criticizes that Lili faces "the pronominal dilemma" because the pronoun "I," for conventional transsexual writing, is questioned as to whether it should be used to refer to two different individuals so Lili has to use the third person pronoun in referring to Andreas (p. 509). However, Andreas explains

that it is because he and Lili are separate persons: “Lili and I became two beings. If Lili was not there, we spoke of her as of a third person. And when Lili was there – that is, when I was not there – I was spoken of between her and Grete as of a third person” (Elbe, 1933, p. 68). Lili also explains her reason that she needs to separate herself from Andreas: “I was too close to everything. Hence, I often found it repugnant to speak of myself as of a third person” (Elbe, 1933, p. 282). Andreas and Lili’s conscious use of different pronouns shows linguistic performativity. According to Butler (1999), gender is what one performs rather than a noun because “gender as substance, the viability of man and woman as nouns, is called into question by the dissonant play of attributes that fail to conform to sequential or casual models of intelligibility” (p. 33). Gender is not restricted to words because there are many factors that play an important role in forming gender identity. Since gender is performative, Andreas/Lili’s use of different pronouns is not a problem of convention but the awareness to perform with the attempt to constitute the identity. Andreas and Lili’s use of different pronouns is, thus, a part of forming identity through linguistic performativity.

Andreas’s performativity can further be seen in the performance of femininity. Caughie (2013) claims that “the memoir adheres to a more conventional view of sexual difference” (p. 510) because Lili is born through sex reassignment surgery and tries to be different from Andreas through the “performance of femininity” (2013, p. 510), thus, “the narrative works hard to reinforce the dualistic distinctions” (2013, p. 511). However, Andreas’s performance of femininity highlights the concept of gender performativity which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Butler (1999) states that drag performance shows that all gender is performative because “in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency” (p. 187). Therefore, there is no original gender since all gender is constructed and practiced within heteronormativity.

Andreas performs a woman through female costume and accessories. He begins dressing as a woman when Grete asks him to be a model for her painting by wearing female clothing with “high-heeled shoes,” and “carnival wig” (Elbe, 1933, p. 64). With these female accessories, Grete compliments Andreas as “the most perfect ladies’

model” (Elbe, 1933, p. 64). Grete’s opinion shows gender performativity since the traits of “the most perfect ladies” are performed and expressed through clothing. After the operation, Andreas is always Lili who dresses as a woman. When Lili receives a silk negligee as a present from a Parisian friend, she dresses in “the most charming Parisian negligee” (Elbe, 1933, p. 136). By dressing as a woman in “a silk nightdress with lace trimming, ... powered, with bangle, necklace, and rings,” everyone perceives Andreas as a woman, “compliments” Lili for her appearance, and calls her “Lili” (Elbe, 1933, p. 139). In Lili’s room at the Women’s Clinic, she keeps everything she “need[s] ready to hand” for her feminine performance: In the drawers, she keeps night-dresses, and her “beauty-parlour” because she “would always like to look pretty — even when she is being operated upon” (Elbe, 1933, p. 204). By performing a woman through feminine clothing and accessories, Andreas makes people perceive him as a woman.

Through performativity, Andreas discovers Lili who has the will of her own. Although Andreas at first performs as a woman to be a model for Grete to paint, Andreas does not do it just to please Grete. Indeed, Andreas “cannot deny” that he “enjoy[s]” this disguise in feminine performance and he “like[s]” the softness of women’s clothing (Elbe, 1933, p. 64). It is not Grete but Andreas who decides how often he will perform as a woman, so Lili comes “as often as she liked” (Elbe, 1933, p. 105). Unlike the biological sex that Andreas was born with, gender is what Andreas determines to perform.

Gender performativity is a channel for Andreas’s happiness and the expression of his desire. When Andreas must control himself to act as a man to conform to socially constructed role, Andreas feels that having to wear male attire is “dull and insipid” (Elbe, 1933, p. 171), and “absurd” (Elbe, 1933, p. 46). Even Grete sees Andreas as “the fraud” who deprives Lili’s happiness because Andreas has “robbed” Lili of her best years (Elbe, 1933, p. 135). However, Andreas is happy when he performs as a woman. By performing a woman, Lili “felt at home” (Elbe, 1933, p. 64), and “enjoyed herself immensely” (Elbe, 1933, p.79). Instead of conforming to the given male role in the heteronormative society, Andreas finds happiness in performing a woman as he desires.

The concept of gender performativity is presented when Lili's performativity can make strangers believe that she is a woman. When Lili attends an artists' ball for the first time, an officer who asks her out for every dance "would not believe" (Elbe, 1933, p. 66) when Lili tells him that she is not a real woman. In a theatrical performance where Lili is invited to perform as a Parisienne, no one notices that Lili is not a real woman, and "not a soul in the hall suspected that Lili was not a genuine Parisienne" (Elbe, 1933, p. 78). At the dancing bar, no one "suspected [Andreas and Lili's] double existence" (Elbe, 1933, p. 86). Inger's friend, Karen, also "did not recognize" (Elbe, 1933, p. 144) that Lili is not a woman. Indeed, everyone perceives Lili as a woman due to her performativity.

Gender performativity is further emphasized when Andreas's family and Andreas/Lili's friends and acquaintances do not recognize him/her when Andreas performs as Lili who looks like a woman. As Andreas, Grete, and Claud have been to Paris year after year, everyone in Paris knows Andreas. However, "nobody in the town suspected the identity of [Lili] who now and then strolled with Grete and Claud through the alleys of the town and out into the country" (Elbe, 1933, p. 83). The Count who knows Lili from the artists' club does not recognize Lili when he later sees Andreas. He tells Andreas that "it is very strange" that Andreas and Lili are brother and sister because Lili "does not resemble you in the least" (Elbe, 1933, p. 89). Even Andreas's parents also do not recognize that Lili is their son who performs as a woman: When Lili discloses her identity, they are surprised: "They could no longer trust their own eyes" (Elbe, 1933, p. 91). Andreas's mother exclaims that "I cannot believe" (Elbe, 1933, p. 91). Moreover, Dr. Kamer who knows Andreas does not recognize that Andreas performs as Lili. Lili notices from the doctor's tone that "he had not the least suspicion of the identity of the person standing before him" (Elbe, 1933, p. 146). Even when Lili tells him that "The gentleman and I, Doctor, are, in fact, one and the same person," Dr. Kamer is still "completely dumbfounded" (Elbe, 1933, pp. 146-147). After the operation, Lili goes back to Copenhagen which is Andreas's hometown, but "nobody recognized her," "nobody saw anything unusual in her" (Elbe, 1933, pp. 237-238), and "no one takes any notice of [her] in the streets" (Elbe, 1933, p. 252). In addition,

two of Andreas's studio comrades do not recognize Lili, and whisper "By Jove, what a fine pair of legs" (Elbe, 1933, p. 238). The fact that even those who know Andreas/Lili do not recognize this double existence is like the affirmation for Lili that she is really seen as a woman.

The concept of how gender is performative is highlighted at the Gipsy bar where Claud and Andreas are about to dance together. Their dance is interrupted by the manager who informs them that two gentlemen are not allowed to dance together. Next evening, Andreas who performs as Lili goes to the same dancing bar with Grete and Claud. The manager compliments Claud and Lili's dance with "the vigorous applause" (Elbe, 1933, p. 85). This situation shows gender performativity in two aspects. The first aspect is the acceptance of gender performativity according to heteronormativity. This aspect is the case if the manager realizes that Andreas and Lili are the same person performing heteronormative acts. The applause from the manager shows his acceptance of gender as performative. The second aspect is Andreas's achievement of gender performativity. This is the case if the manager does not realize that Andreas and Lili are the same person. When Andreas performs a woman in the name of Lili through the female costume and role in dancing, the applause of the manager shows that Lili succeeds in performing female gender without the manager's recognition that Lili is Andreas in female costume. Both cases demonstrate how gender is performative.

The attractiveness of Andreas's feminine performance on men shows how a man can perform as an attractive woman. At the artists' ball, Andreas's performativity is "a complete success" (Elbe, 1933, p. 66) as Lili can attract a lot of attention from men. Here, Lili attracts an officer who pays "special attentions" to Lili, and finally "called her out for every dance" (Elbe, 1933, p. 66). Lili also attracts a cavalier who "would not let her go," and "requested permission to kiss her, at least, on the neck" (Elbe, 1933, p. 66). The attention from men at this ball which "was followed by others" demonstrates Lili's "growing success" (Elbe, 1933, p. 66). Lili's attractiveness shows further when she is invited to perform as a Parisienne in a theatrical performance where she is "at the desire of all the company" and "was sought after more than any other dancer at the ball" (Elbe, 1933, pp. 79-80). At the

dancing bar, Lili attracts the manager's interest, and she receives compliments from the manager: "Mademoiselle dances charmingly, charmingly" (Elbe, 1933, p. 86). A man, thus, can become an attractive woman through performativity.

Andreas creates Lili's identity through performance of femininity over a period. Butler (1999) suggests that gender is "an identity tenuously constituted in time" through "a stylized repetition of acts" (p. 191). To express gender, then, is to repeatedly perform what one wants to be perceived. Andreas performs being a woman by wearing female costume over a period in public in the name of Lili. Overtime, Lili has become "Grete's favorite model" (Elbe, 1933, p. 21). The fact that "Lili wandered through [Grete's] best works" (Elbe, 1933, p. 21) and "for many years [Andreas and Grete] played [their] game with Lili" (Elbe, 1933, p. 65) shows how often Andreas has repeatedly performed as Lili. Andreas does not only repeatedly perform as Lili for Grete's art works, but he also repeatedly performs as Lili at "various carnivals and balls" (Elbe, 1933, p. 27) where Andreas's performance of femininity is seen as "an attraction Lili has for the other sex" (Elbe, 1933, p. 27). The more time passes, the more Andreas keeps performing as Lili: "month after month Lili insisted with growing stubbornness on her rights, and gave place to [Andreas] with increasing reluctance" (Elbe, 1933, p. 76). Andreas performs as a woman not only for months but for years: "Year after year... Lili took part in the festivities and excursions" (Elbe, 1933, p. 76). Lili performs female gender not only through clothing but also through feminine activities. Lili has been "sewing or embroidering" (Elbe, 1933, p. 95) for a period to construct her own identity. After the operation, Lili continues her feminine activities: "she would sit sewing new clothes, or lend a hand with the work of the house" (Elbe, 1933, p. 259). Lili's female identity is constructed in time through the repetition of feminine performance.

Apart from performing a woman through feminine costume and activities, Lili wants to create her identity which is different from Andreas. Lili has memories and habits, which has "nothing whatever to do with [Andreas's]" (Elbe, 1933, p. 95). Lili also has "different inclinations from [Andreas's]" (Elbe, 1933, p. 120). After the first operation, Lili's handwriting is different from Andreas's: It has changed

into “a woman’s script” (Elbe, 1933, p. 131). When Lili shows her character in her speech, movement, and thought, she “veiled completely the character of Andreas... I had to demonstrate every day that I was a different creature from him, that I was a woman” (Elbe, 1933, p. 235). To perform different identity, Lili wants to change age, birthday, and name because “I find it is unjust for me to retain his age and birthday, for my biological age is quite different from his. And it is also painful for me that his name instead of my name is on the official records” because “Andreas and I have nothing whatever to do with each other” (Elbe, 1933, p. 244). Lili emphasizes her rejection of Andreas’s birthday and age because “his birthday signifies for me nothing but a liability,” and “I will not drag Andreas’ age along with me like a burden” (Elbe, 1933, p. 246). Lili tries to perform differently from Andreas to create her new identity as a woman.

To completely perform a woman in a new identity, Lili tries to reject everything relating to Andreas. Lili rejects Andreas’s past which is not hers, and she does not talk about it with anyone even with Grete who writes in the diary: “About the past [Lili] does not say a single word. It often seems to me as if she were without any past at all” (Elbe, 1933, p. 138). When Lili thinks of the past and Paris, she “fled from this recollection” because “there could be no past for her. Everything in the past belonged to a person who had vanished, who was dead,” and “she was a creature without any past” (Elbe, 1933, pp. 170-171). Lili rejects any connection with Andreas by forgetting anything related to him. She writes in the diary that “You must believe me when I say that I have forgotten Andreas and everything connected with him. For me he is a dead person. If by chance a recollection arises in me, I see nothing but clouds, vague clouds” (Elbe, 1933, p. 202). Lili stresses her desire to be different from Andreas that she would like to “break all the ties with the past” of Andreas (Elbe, 1933, p. 218) by rejecting any connection with Andreas, Lili can perform a woman in a new identity.

By performing a new identity, Lili feels the need to reject Andreas’s family, relations, and friends. Several questions occur in Lili’s mind as she tries to cut all ties with Andreas: “Supposing she never returned there? Would that not be the simplest? Would it not be better for her the new creature without a past and thus without a family,

to renounce everything connected with Andreas? To renounce her friends and relations in Denmark? To renounce even the friends in Paris, to start a new life right from the beginning?” (Elbe, 1933, pp. 217-218). As Lili thinks about the question of “whether she ought not to part from Grete forever” (Elbe, 1933, p. 218), Lili and Grete later get divorce: “on the 6th October, there were apprised of the King’s decree, which declared invalid the marriage concluded between Andreas and Grete” (Elbe, 1933, p. 229). While rejecting the ties with Andreas’s connections, Lili “had built up her own circle of friends and acquaintances,” and “built up her own world around her” (Elbe, 1933, p. 95) to create her new identity.

Lili’s performativity as a woman is also constructed through her intention to be different from Andreas by declaring not to paint. On the train between Berlin and Dresden, Lili appreciates the surroundings as if her eyes “had become the eyes of a painter”; however, Lili rejects that “those are not my eyes. They are Andreas’ eye” (Elbe, 1933, p. 155). Lili is afraid to appreciate the world as Andreas had done because she “feared she would never get on to her own feet, never be loosen from Andreas” (Elbe, 1933, p. 155). Lili avoids painting because “everything that relates to Andreas is detested by her, but especially painting,” and “in order to break right away from Andreas, she must, above all, avoid practicing his most characteristic activity” (Elbe, 1933, p. 164). When Andreas’s sister tells Lili that they have lost an artist in Andreas, Lili points out that “we were two beings, Andreas and I... that I shall never be able to paint... that I don’t even want to paint” (Elbe, 1933, p. 234). Lili rejects the connection with Andreas’s pictures by stating in her diary that she will not regard Andreas’ name as her pseudonym because it “would be wrong as I have nothing whatever to do with Andreas’ pictures. They were created by Andreas” (Elbe, 1933, p. 247). Lili does not desire to paint because she has “no desire to continue [Andreas’s] work. My life must go its own way” (Elbe, 1933, p. 248). By rejecting to continue Andreas’s painting, Lili does not mean that woman cannot paint but she wants to perform a woman by creating her new artistic identity. Lili can paint if she does not continue Andreas’s painting and reputation but starts her own painting: “If I should really paint, I would have to build up my career right from the start” (Elbe, 1933, p. 246). By rejecting

Andreas's artistic impulses, Lili does not mean that woman cannot be an artist: "Perhaps I am an artist"; however, Lili wants to "find another outlet for [her] artistic impulses, that is for the desire to shape something" (Elbe, 1933, p. 248). Lili has artistic desire as she hopes to "be able to give a visible-audible expression to all this, in some artistic form, whether it be painting, or music, or prose, or something else" (Elbe, 1933, p. 249). Lili's new artistic identity is shown in her interest in music. Lili "find[s] [her] greatest release in music" (Elbe, 1933, p. 249). During the day, Lili "would sit at the piano and play for hours" (Elbe, 1933, p. 259). While rejecting Andreas's identity of a painter, Lili finds her artistic identity in music.

Lili's performance of femininity shows the possibilities for reconfiguration. According to Judith Butler, drag performance shows that "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction" (1999, p. 192). Drag performance reconfigures gender out of the restrictive heteronormativity and challenges the rigid frame of sexual binary. At Lili's parodic repetition of a woman by wearing female costume and high heeled shoes for Grete to paint the portrait of Anna, both Lili and Grete laugh "as though it were a great joke" (Elbe, 1933, p. 64). Lili's parodic repetition of her feminine performance shows how she can reconfigure gender out of the restrictive frame of male/female binary.

Lili's gender performativity through sex reassignment surgery shows her creative desire which goes beyond gender binary of male/female. Gailey (2017) claims that "the idea of Elbe as an LGBT standard bearer is hopelessly queered by the relentless heterosexism of *Man into Woman*" (p.1720). Gailey not only criticizes that *Man into Woman* propagates heterosexism, but Gailey also claims that "if the homophobic rhetoric in *Man into Woman* is to be taken at face value, then contemporary queers would want nothing to do with Elbe" (2017, p. 1724). However, Lili's attempt to perform a woman through sex reassignment surgery blurs male/female binary as she describes herself as "a bridge-builder" (Elbe, 1933, p. 250) between a man and a woman. As Lili is one of the very first man who undergoes sex reassignment surgery to become

a woman, her case is quite experimental and unpredictable. Lili compares herself as “a strange bridge” which she stands “on one of the banks, which is the present day,” and she must “build it clear across to the other bank, which often I cannot see at all and sometimes only vaguely, and now and then in a dream” (Elbe, 1933, p. 250). Lili is constructing her gender identity. Instead of aiming to be on one side of gender binary, Lili intends to build a bridge “across that abyss which separates man and woman” (Elbe, 1933, p. 270). The metaphor of “a bridge-builder” emphasizes the concept of gender performativity as gender is socially constructed.

The success of becoming a woman, for Lili, is not limited to the result of sex reassignment surgery, but it is in the transformative process of performativity. Lili is happy in this process of performativity. She tells Grete that “If it should turn out badly, you must thank the Professor for all that he has done and tell him that I spent the happiest time of my life in the Women’s Clinic” (Elbe, 1933, p. 205). Lili does not only transform herself to become a woman but her publication of her performativity and sex reassignment surgery also transforms the society as it creates empathy and understanding of transgender people. After Lili published her story, she “received many proofs of sympathy, especially from women. Women whom she did not know in the least sent her letters full of comprehension and enthusiasm. Flowers were sent her by unknown admirers” (Elbe, 1933, p. 256). Although Lili dies in the end, this transformative process of performativity, for her, is worth dying for.

Conclusion

The possibilities of reconstruction and transformation in *Man into Woman* are in the processes of performing. Andreas performs a woman named Lili using different pronouns. Through gender performativity, Andreas determines his performance and finds happiness in the identity he wants to repeatedly perform. The concept of gender performativity is highlighted when Andreas becomes an attractive woman, and no one recognizes him. To perform a woman, Lili creates her new identity which is different from Andreas. Lili’s experience of gender performativity and sex reassignment surgery not only transforms Andreas to become

a woman, but also transforms the society to be more empathetic and understanding. Lili's success in becoming a woman is not restricted to the result of sex reassignment surgery because the transformative process of performativity is more important than any negative consequences.

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