

# The Danish Girl Movie : A Study of The Coming-Out-Process

## The Danish Girl การศึกษาเรื่องการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศ

ณัฐพงษ์ สัมมาวงศ์<sup>1</sup> และ ปรียาภรณ์ เจริญบุตร<sup>2</sup>

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### บทคัดย่อ

แนวคิดขั้นตอนการพัฒนาของกระบวนการการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศของโคลแมน ได้นำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในการศึกษานี้เพื่อการวิเคราะห์ภาพยนตร์ เดอะ เดนิช เกิร์ล ซึ่งกำกับโดย ทอม ฮูเปอร์ ภาพยนตร์เรื่องนี้อิงจากเรื่องราวจริงของ ไอนาร์ เวเกเนอร์ ในภายหลังเป็นที่รู้จักในชื่อ ลิลี เอลเบ ซึ่งเธอเป็นบุคคลแรกที่ได้รับการผ่าตัดแปลงเพศจากชายเป็นหญิงในปี ค.ศ. 1931 การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศของลิลี เอลเบ และเพื่ออธิบายเทคนิคมุกกล้องที่ช่วยสื่อความหมายของกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศของลิลี เอลเบ ในภาพยนตร์เดอะ เดนิช เกิร์ล ตามที่ทฤษฎีการแสดงทางเพศของจูดีธ บัตเลอร์ (1990) ได้ช่วยสะท้อนให้เข้าใจถึงเพศที่ไอนาร์เป็นในระหว่างการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศก่อนที่จะกลายเป็นคนข้ามเพศเต็มตัว เธอได้ผ่าน 4 ขั้นตอนของการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศ คือ 1.ก่อนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ 2.การเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ 3.การสำรวจตัวเอง และ 4.การมีความสัมพันธ์ครั้งแรก แต่เธอไม่สามารถไปถึงขั้นตอนที่ 5.การบูรณาการ เนื่องจากเธอไม่ประสบความสำเร็จในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ขณะที่เธอเป็นคนข้ามเพศได้ อีกทั้งแนวคิดขนาดภาพของเมอร์คาโด ช่วยแสดงให้เห็นถึงความหมายของกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์

ทางเพศในแต่ละฉากของภาพยนตร์ ซึ่งพบว่าเทคนิคโคลสอัพช็อต มีเดียมลองช็อต ลองช็อต กรุปช็อต และฟูลช็อต ถูกใช้ในภาพยนตร์เพื่อสื่อถึงกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศของลิลี จากการศึกษาขั้นตอนของกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศและเทคนิคมุกกล้องภาพยนตร์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศ ทำให้เข้าใจกระบวนการเปิดเผยอัตลักษณ์ทางเพศของกลุ่มบุคคลที่มีความหลากหลายทางเพศตามที่ถูกนำเสนอในสื่อต่าง ๆ

**คำสำคัญ:** LGBTQ+, Coming-out process, Transgender, The Danish Girl

### Abstract

The developmental stages of the coming out process as established by Coleman was applied in this study as a tool to analyze The Danish Girl movie by Tom Hooper. The film was based on the actual incident of Einar Wegener, afterward known as Lili Elbe, who was the first person to undergo sex reassignment surgery from male to female in 1931. The purpose of this research are (1) to explore how

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the transgender character, Lili Elbe, 'comes out' and (2) to explicate what kinds of frame size help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*. As Judith Butler's gender performative (1990) helps understand the genders that Einar performs during the coming-out process, Lili was revealed to go through 4 stages: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, and first relationship. However, Lili could not go to stage 5 (integration) since she could not establish a successful relationship in a new gender as transgender. Mercado's frame size technique is employed to ensure that each scene conveys the meaning of the coming-out process. The following frame sizes were used in the film to help portray the coming-out process: medium close-up shot, medium-long shot, long shot, group shot, and two-shot techniques. Through this study, the stages of the coming-out process as well as the movie technique related to the coming-out process were investigated, which thus can be utilized to illuminate the understanding of coming-out process in LGBTQ+ people as represented in media.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+, Coming-out process, Transgender, *The Danish Girl*

## THE DANISH GIRL MOVIE: A STUDY OF THE COMING-OUT-PROCESS

The term homosexuality first emerged in the language at the end of the nineteenth century, and it follows that the most challenging question would be what causes homosexuality? Is it nature, nurture, biology, or the environment that causes this? The debate continues to rage on a century later, but there are possibly more comprehensive terms, such as LGBTQ+. LGBTQ+ refers to people who are non-straight or known as homosexual. The term LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, or questioning; these terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. It is crucial to note that sex and gender are entirely distinguished. In general, since sex and gender are closely related, it is difficult to understand the difference between them. According to Prince (2008), sex refers to a biological and physical

concept based on characteristics to determine humans as male or female (29). Thus, both men and women are taught to behave appropriately according to their sex: male and female, to meet social norms or social expectations. In contrast, according to Butler (1990), gender refers to the social attributes of masculinity and femininity (24-25). Thus, gender is a notion that reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of behavior that exclude biological categories (Qtd. in Kim et al. 78). To put it another way, it is fostered by social and cultural variables that socialize persons as masculine or feminine.

When it comes to transgender, it has been a world issue since the late 1950s. There is a belief that transgender is a third gender apart of males and females who think and behave differently from their birth gender. Transgender refers to those "who do not follow traditional gender norms" (Lombardi et al. 90), meaning that they have a gender identification or expression that is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Therefore, intersex, transsexuals, cross-dressers, and those who do not comply with traditional gender norms are also referred to as transgender. Some transgender people tend to undergo surgery, such as sex reassignment, to make genital and lifestyle changes that are incompatible with their biological gender.

When looking at sex reassignment surgery in the present, compared to the past, it seems that medical science in sex reassignment surgery has been gradually successful. However, it was serious during the initial sex reassignment surgery. In the United States in 1917, the American tuberculosis specialist, Alan L. Hart, became one of the first transsexuals to undergo hysterectomy and gonadectomy. The first transgender woman to experience vaginoplasty is Dora Richter. In Denmark, the Act on Sterilisation and Castration (Danish: Lov om sterilisation og kastration) passed in June 1929 and was one of the world's first sex-change laws. Lili Elbe was the next sex reassignment surgery patient from 1930 to 1931. In a series of surgeries, she has removed the testicles and penis and transplanted the ovaries and uterus. She emigrated to Germany in 1930 and later legally changed her gender and name in her Danish passport. Unfortunately, in 1931, she died of

complications following her fifth operation (Blumberg).

The term coming out refers to the process by which LGBTQ+ people experience acceptance of their sexual orientation and gender identity and openly reveal their identity to others. Each will experience the coming-out process differently. Moreover, LGBTQ+ and social life are linked, and LGBTQ+ lives are represented in the media and literary works. After the concept of gender diversity has been popular worldwide 1970s onwards, LGBTQ+, especially transgender characters, are presented more through the media: movies, songs, books, etc., to show that there are many genders in society. Moreover, people's gender and sexuality are fluid, and it changes at any time (Butler 199). The literary work related to LGBTQ+ helps other people to understand, respect, support, and inspire LGBTQ+ people to be themselves. Important literary works portraying LGBTQ+ characters include both British and American novels—*Giovanni's Room*, a 1956 gay novel, by James Baldwin, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* written in the 19th century by Oscar Wilde, and *The Price of Salt*, a lesbian fiction, by Patricia Highsmith, and so forth. In addition, LGBTQ+ people are not presented and portrayed in not only literary works or books but also movies.

There are countless studies on LGBTQ+ subjects in terms of sexual deviation, transsexual acceptance, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender fluidity, homosexual depiction in movies, and the coming out in films. The studies on the topics of LGBTQ+ such as Makruf's study in 2009, *A Sexual Deviation Analysis of Ennis Del Mar's Characterization on "Brokeback Mountain" Movie*, Ilmi 's 2011 thesis, *Accepting the Transsexual in Kimberly Peirce's Boys Don't Cry Movie (1999): A Sociological Approach*, Ikawati's research (2020), *An Analysis on Chloe Movie: A Study of Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Fluidity*, explains that gender is a flexible concept, Rudy's research(2016), *The Depiction of Homosexuality in American Movies*, and Dye (2020) in her study, *Representing Sexuality: An Analysis of Coming Out in Contemporary Film*.

Previous studies have been done on the topic of sexual deviation, transsexual acceptance, gender

identity, sexual orientation, gender fluidity, homosexual depiction in movies, and the coming out in films, while studies on the transgendered people's coming-out process in movies have not been found yet. Therefore, the differentiation of this research is that the research employed Coleman's developmental stages of the coming-out process in analyzing how the transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out throughout the film, *The Danish Girl*.

*The Danish Girl* is a biographical-love-drama film directed by Tom Hooper in 2015 and based on David Ebershoff's novel *The Danish Girl* (2000). Furthermore, the film is inspired by the real-life stories of Einar Wegener (Lili Elbe) and Gerda Wegener. The plot is mainly set in the mid-1920s in Europe: Denmark, Germany, and France. The protagonists named Einar Wegener starred by Eddie Redmayne and his wife named Gerda Wenger starred by Alicia Vikander are a married couple struggling to have a kid. They both work as artists for a living. Einar thrives in his landscape painting, but Gerda pursues portrait painting. One day Gerda requests Einar to dress as a woman model for her painting. However, Einar soon perceives himself as a woman and prefers to be ultimately Lili. This leads Einar to undergo sex reassignment surgery because he decides to live his new life as a woman, Lili. Interestingly, even though Einar (Lili) wants to be wholly a woman by undergoing a sex change, which means that their relationship would be stopped, Gerda has always supported Lili to do so and look after her after surgery. The film also depicts the relationship of Gerda and Lili, which is called platonic love, a very gentle relationship between people who do not want to have sexual intercourse and are not practicing it. Thus, Lili is certainly the protagonist that portrays a transgender character. Interestingly, being transgender is not easy; she has to take time to come out from a man to transgender. Thus, this research aims to study how the transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out throughout *The Danish Girl* movie. Coleman's Developmental Stages of the Coming Out Process model is employed in this study to explore how Lili Elbe takes the coming-out process.

The film *The Danish Girl* has been variously criticized about aspects such as the actor's performance and the intended message of the movie. Most reviews include negativity about the acting in transgender roles, while there is also a positive review about the overall portrayal of the coming out of transgender character.

The Guardian, London's most famous daily newspaper, have critiqued Redmayne's performance: It is a very physical rendering: the emphasis is on Einar learning how to be Lili, and Redmayne nicely captures Einar's study of a certain stylized female body language, with every tilt of his head and turn of his ankle. But he also overdoes it" (The Guardian, 2018). As described, Redmayne's performance in *The Danish Girl* movie is appealing as he could nicely perform Einar's character as a transgender should be; however, it could be overacting in some points. IndieWire, a film industry and review website, also added that the film "performs womanhood by way of stereotype." As can be seen, instead of playing transgender roles as Lili, Redmayne was emulating femininity overall, going up to his exaggerated acting. The village voice, the American news and culture newspaper, also added that it is "exaggerated, simpering body language, all head-ducking, and languid caresses, which she [Redmayne playing as Lili] learns studying a peep-show stripper — someone who is herself playacting a faux femininity for men."

The *Danish Girl* film was loosely based on a fictional book by David Ebershoff; however, the film did not tell the true story of Lili and Gerda Wegener. Lili Elbe died in 1931, at the age of 48, from organ rejection following a womb transplant, while in the film, she dies after the second sex reassignments surgery (Akande). Therefore, the film contains inaccurate representations of historical events.

However, *The Danish Girl* is a genuinely charming and excellent film with an inspirational message of discovering one's true self (Ellmoos). The movie encourages people to be proud to be themselves, and it demonstrates that sometimes taking a risk is necessary in order to make a dream come reality.

In regard to *The Danish Girl*, Chotkarnchanawat and Senchantichai discussed how Einar Wegener's

life was portrayed and represented in the novel *The Danish Girl* in their research, *Transgender in the Novel The Danish Girl*. By using Judith Butler's queer theory, the study has shown that factors contributing to Einar becoming a pioneer for the transgender community are 1) confusion, 2) society-based, and 3) family.

Similarly, according to the study of Kim et al. on *Analysis of Gender Identity Expressed in the Movie Based on Judith Butler's Gender Theory*, the purpose of this research is to examine the characteristics of genderless fashion phenomena in the movie *The Danish Girl* in depth. By examining the fashions featured in the movie, the study provides timely insight into gender identities through clothes that the transgender character has worn throughout *The Danish Girl* movie.

In conclusion, not many studies on LGBT and gender-related issues have been conducted on *The Danish Girl*. Chotkarnchanawat and Senchantichai's study focuses on how Einar Wegener's life was portrayed and represented in the novel, while Kim et al.'s study focuses on examining the characteristics of genderless fashion phenomena in the film. Previous research may have been done on transgender life in the novel and fashion in the film; therefore, as among the existing studies, the coming-out process in *The Danish Girl* has not been found yet. Therefore, since related studies indicate that it is worth exploring another theme in the film, the researcher proposes studying how the coming-out process was portrayed.

The study of the coming-out process of Hooper's *The Danish Girl* might help build an understanding of LGBTQ+ and the coming-out process through the transgender character in *The Danish Girl*. In addition, it is hoped that it will more or less raise awareness to people as world citizens on this subject. This study also aims to promote gender awareness and encourage people to understand more about LGBTQ+ people.

#### Research Questions

1. How does the transgender character, Lili Elbe, come out throughout the film, *The Danish Girl*?
2. What frame size techniques help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*?

## Research Purposes

The purpose of this research is to explore how the transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out and to explicate what movie techniques help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*.

## Methods

As this study is in the form of literary research, the textual analysis is the primary tool to analyze the film *The Danish Girl*. The text includes dialogue both verbal and nonverbal texts in the movie. Since the film is visual text, the visual analysis is used to analyze the movie techniques used in selected scenes that portray the coming-out process.

The primary data for this study is taken from the film version of *The Danish Girl* directed by Tom Hooper. The data is both filtered and analyzed by the qualitative method. The following theoretical frameworks will also be applied to this research:

### The coming out process

There are many approaches to examining the coming-out process; however, this research focuses on Coleman's model. Coleman's developmental stages of the coming out process (1982) asserted that homosexuality is not a definable entity. Still, it is a normal change in sexual behavior, propensity, and sexual orientation, expressed to different degrees and in different ways by different individuals. Coleman's developmental stages of the coming out process model are as follows: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationship, and integration. The research suggests that five stages describe many patterns in people of predominantly same-sex sexual orientation. He also claimed that this model does not assume that every LGBTQ+ people will go through each stage and evolve naturally through all the stages. Some may not start at the first stage or experience every stage in order, while others may get locked in one stage and never reach the final one. Therefore, it is not surprising that some may experience a few stages simultaneously. Some start at a higher stage of development before focusing on the tasks in the previous stage. Interestingly, some who reached the final stage can attend to the previous stage if

the situation requires, making the coming-out process flexible.

Similar to the previous Coleman's models, Troiden (1988) has subsequently presented a model that contains 4 stages: 1) Sensitization, 2) Identity Confusion, 3) Identity Assumption, and 4) Commitment. The research suggested that sexual identity develops slowly over a period since people are not born with their own perception as heterosexual or homosexual. The research tended to focus on only lesbian and gay, so it might not meet the study's objectives to figure out the coming out process of transgender in *The Danish Girl*. However, this is consistent with Coleman's models proposed by Coleman in that the research claimed that "the ideal types are not real. Nothing and no one exactly fit them" (105). It can therefore be concluded that LGBTQ+ people share similar stages of identity development. However, the development of the coming-out process in many individuals is more chaotic, fluid, or complex than these models could describe. Still, the framework continues to help us understand LGBTQ+ people and the coming-out process. Thus, Coleman's coming-out process model of developmental stages is used as the main framework to discover and analyze transgender character's coming-out process in *The Danish Girl* movie.

### Mercado's movie technique

A film can be a powerful and influential tool for everyone, and it has the capacity to shape people's perspectives of the world, other people, and communities (Thomson 8). *The Filmmaker's Eye* by Mercado includes cinematic frame size filmmaking techniques and the inner workings of the basic shots that generate the cinematic experience. It demonstrates how visuals may be used to communicate with an audience by frame sizes. Mercado's frame sizes are extreme close up, close up, medium close up, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot, extreme long shot, over the shoulder shot, establishing shot, subjective shot, two shot, group shot, canted shot, emblematic shot, abstract shot, macro shot, zoom shot, pan shot, tilt shot, dolly shot, dolly zoom shot, tracking shot, steadicam shot, crane shot, and sequence shot. The transgender personalities

represented in films, including their posture, clothing, voice tone and talks, emotions, sexual preferences, and reactions to male homosexual people, were quite similar to the genuine transgender people (Mongkolwatee 2). Thus, Mercado's *The Filmmaker's Eye* is employed to figure out frame size techniques that help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*.

#### **Judith Butler's gender performativity**

Butler defines a performative act as one that causes a series of consequences. Because gender is performative, gender cannot be appeared prior to gendered acts, as the acts continuously construct the identity. Butler (1990) stated that no one can be a gender before performing in gendered behavior. The fact that people were born male, or female does not determine their behavior or gender because people rather learn to act in specific ways in order to fit within society. Therefore, the way people act, or the way people perform has become a gender. Since this research aims to explore the coming out of a transgender character, therefore, Butler's gender performativity is used as a lens to help understand the genders that the transgender character performs during the coming-out process

#### **Definition of Terms**

**Coming-out** is "the act of revealing one's sexual orientation or gender identity" (Collins dictionary).

**Transgender** is a term that refers to those whose gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth (Cambridge Dictionary).

**Gender performativity** is Judith Butler's notion that describes how gender identity is formed via a series of actions and how behaviors create gender.

#### **Limitation of the Study**

This research, however, is subject to limitations. The research focuses on finding out the way transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out and the frame size techniques that helps portray the coming-out process throughout the movie. Therefore, the research does not extend to other movie techniques such as color, music, lighting, editing, and so forth. However, the cinematic frame size techniques utilized in the film to

help portray the coming-out process is covered. Thus, it illustrates how the transgender character comes out through cinematic frame size techniques used in the film, *The Danish Girl*.

#### **How the transgendered character, Lili Elbe, comes out and Cinematic frame size techniques**

Coleman's developmental stages of the coming out process is applied to figure out how the transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out throughout the film, *The Danish Girl*. Butler's gender performativity is also employed to be a lens to define what gender the character performs during the coming out process. Moreover, Mercado's cinematic frame size technique is employed to determine what frame size techniques help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*. It is categorized into five developmental stages: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationship, and integration.

##### **1. Pre-coming out**

The consciousness of LGBTQ+ interests and emotions are typically gradual and challenging. When LGBTQ+ become conscious of their feelings and identity, they tend to reject, ignore, or repress the feelings and identity. Thus, pre-coming out refers to the process of preconscious recognition of LGBTQ+ identification.



**Picture 1. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting Einar as a man**  
(*The Danish Girl*, 2015)

As one can see from Picture 1, the first person that appears in the film is the male protagonist, Einar Wagner, who represents masculinity by dressing suit. According to Butler's gender performativity, every man acts their masculinity by dressing in certain outfits that



are taught to be masculine. Einar Wegener was born with male external genitalia. As the first criterion of gender assignment is often biological attributes, he was confirmed as male immediately after birth. As a result, he was expected to have a strong figure and behave in a male manner. Additionally, Einar married Gerda, representing a traditional norm of a heterosexual pairing. They are expected to have a kid to complete life as a heterosexual couple. Gerda asks, “have you [Einar] tried drinking raw eggs? Do it. For my sake.” The purpose of consuming raw eggs is to nourish and enhance protein in the male sperm in order to make them healthy for the improvement of fertility. This evidence reveals that Gerda requires a kid to fulfill her marriage life.



**Picture 2. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting Einar painting the same landscape over time**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Einar is working on a painting of five trees in the woods, which is a familiar sight in their village. This pre-coming out scene illustrates Einar's nostalgia as he paints the same landscape repeatedly. It is a clue that he's doing so because he has been pressing his past and ignoring his feelings for a young boy he kissed in the past. He reveals later in Figure 8 that he has kissed a boy named Han Axcil when he was a little Lili. He has a crush on Han; however, Einar's father came across the incident that they kissed. As a result, Einar must abandon his actual identity as Lili and live as a man until he marries Gerda. He was expected to be a man because of social norms; thus, he has been denying his identity

since he was a child. As one can see from Picture 2, The medium-long is used in the pre-coming out scene, which “showcase a character's body language and some facial expression.” Einar painting the same landscape and putting color on the canvas conveys the feeling of pressing his feeling. As Einar has a crush on Hans when he was young, he presses his actual feeling into the canvas. In a consequence, he keeps repeatedly painting the landscape since he does not want to show his true feeling and identity to others. Thus, the canvas portrays a pre-coming out clue that Einar has the experience of kissing the same-sex, and he has been thinking about it while painting the same landscape.



**Picture 3. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting the protagonist putting on woman's stockings and shoes**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Meanwhile Gerda is working on a massive portrait of a woman, but Oola, who was meant to be her model, has yet to come. She requests Einar to put on the stockings and shoes so that she may continue painting that section of the artwork. He nervously agrees, and then Gerda has to show him how to put his stockings on. She then asks him to hold the dress up to flow nicely over the socks. Then, Oola shows up and says that Lili should be his name. Picture 3 indicates preconscious recognition of the protagonist, Einar, because Einar still does not find himself as LGBTQ+ even though he senses a mysterious feeling in the act of holding the dress and putting on stockings and shoes.



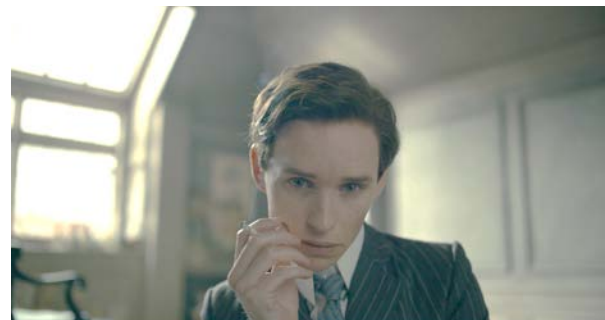
**Picture 4. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting the protagonist wearing his wife's undergarment**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

When Einar and Gerda are kissing, she starts taking off his shirt, but he is wearing her lingerie underneath. This surprises Gerda, but she says nothing about it; instead, she continues to touch him beneath the lingerie and make love. In pre-coming out stage, Einar starts to sense his feminine side, but he does not resist women, so he is able to make love with his wife. As seen in Figure 3, the protagonist, Einar, gradually realizes that he has another side of himself, and he slowly behaves like a woman since he wears his wife's lingerie which is what men should not do. Gerda is "wondering when you [Einar] got so pretty" Einar responds, "I was always pretty, but you just never noticed." Thus, the gender the protagonist performs tends to a female gender as he wears lingerie. Interestingly, he can still have sex with his wife despite performing female gender. This evidence indicates that the protagonist might be in gender confusion during the pre-coming out stage.



**Picture 5. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting Einar disguising as Lili and attending the art event**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

There is an art event that Gerda and Einar are invited to, but he does not want to attend because the people will gush over him as an artist. Finally, Gerda realizes that he can go in disguise, as Lili. Einar is put on the makeup and wig by Gerda. He has transformed and delights at inhabiting a woman's identity. Before entering the event, Einar is unconfident about her looks, so Einar asks Gerda, "Am I pretty enough?"—giving a thrill to the character, to appreciate a new self but not knowing that this is the self he really wants. As Einar decided to disguise himself as female gender shown in figure 4, this scene is the pre-coming out stage since he insists that this disguise is for the purpose of escaping himself from others' attention due to his famous image. Therefore, this evidence illustrates pre-coming out stage because the protagonist is still rejecting LGBTQ+ identity.



**Picture 6. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting Einar denying his actual feeling and identity**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Gerda is shocked after witnessing Lili kissing a man named Henrik at the art event. She is confused as to why the situation goes so far. She requests Einar that "it would be better if Lili didn't come here again." Einar tries to explain that "I wasn't always me. There was a moment when I was just Lili." This implies that Einar did not want to kiss Henrik, but Lili did while Einar was in Lili's mind. Einar had been thinking about Lili and wished for her to reappear. It is concluded that Einar is completely in gender confusion; he rejects his identity and insists that there is also Lili inside him. As shown in Figure 6,



this medium close-up shot displays “the face and the shoulders of the character.” This composition makes the character appear unconfident and weak by using a low frame size, showing how the context of the shot conveys the meaning.



**Picture 7. Pre-coming out stage scene depicting Einar studying his body and acting like a woman**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Einar looks in the mirror and studies his body while wearing Gerda's underwear. He first strips naked, then takes off his trousers. He feels disgusted with his penis and tries to tuck it between his legs. This evidence reveals that the protagonist, Einar, is confused about himself. Figuring out the body through the mirror and the act of tucking his penis between his leg suggest that he is trying to simulate himself having female external genitalia. He is nearly going to stage 2, coming out. In addition, the medium-long shot is also found in the movie scene, Figure 6. The medium-long shot is utilized to “showcase a character's body language, some facial expression, and the surrounding area.” As a result, the medium-long shot portrays Einar learning about his body and being confused about himself in a dressing room. The clothes in the scene are placed within the composition to represent traditionally feminine things, meaning that he is interested in women dressing. Therefore, medium close-up and medium-long shots are employed in the movie to help portray the coming-out process at stage 1: pre-coming out.

## 2. Coming out

Some LGBTQ+ do not identify themselves

as LGBTQ+ in the pre-coming-out stage, yet the protagonist, Einar, accepts his actual gender. Therefore, he quits struggling with him/herself at this stage and enters a process of accepting or making peace with his/her sexuality. The first task that LGBTQ+ is going to face in the coming-out stage is self-admission. Once these emotions have been identified and acknowledged, the next developmental step is to express him/herself with others and tell others.



**Picture 8. Coming out stage scene depicting Einar telling Gerda that there is Lili inside him**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

When Gerda returns home, she is astonished to encounter Einar dressed as Lili. Einar says that despite being in a male body, he has always felt like a woman. This scene indicates that he stops struggling with the rejection of his identity. It is critical that the first ones who know LGBTQ+'s sexual identity should be those who will respond positively. It is considerably easier for LGBTQ+ to bear a negative response or even indirect negative responses from society if they have built up a lot of positive responses to their sexual identity. In the Danish Girl, the protagonist decided to tell his wife that there is another side of him, Lili. Einar thought that he had the wrong gender identification, which was male; Lili is present in Einar's body. He also reveals that there has been Lili inside him since he hissed a boy named Han Axcil when he was a little Lili. Therefore, Lili kissing Han was a starting point of Lili's existence inside Einar. Additionally, Lili has replaced Einar via dress-crossing and become Einar's

regular practice of being a woman. Gerda worries if dressing Einar up for the art event converted him to become a transsexual, but he tells her that he has felt the way his whole life and that she only provided him the first opportunity to experience it. Gerda and Einar thus see a few doctors to find a solution to the problem. In Picture 7, the long shot is found in the movie scene. Through their placement and relative scale in the composition, long shots can be applied to convey narrative and thematic dynamics between characters. The distance between Lili and Gerda suggests the “tension and dramatic impact” in that Lili reveals her identity to Gerda which means that their relationship is about to become distant.



**Picture 9. Coming out stage scene depicting the Lili consulting with the doctor about sex reassignment surgery**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Einar and Gerda meet with a progressive doctor in Germany who tells them that he previously encountered a guy who thought he should be a woman, so he set out to conduct two procedures, the first to remove his male organs and the second, when he's recovered his strength, to establish a vagina. However, the man became terrified and vanished on the day of the procedure. However, Einar accepts to undergo the world's first sex reassignment surgery. Einar “believes that I [he] am a woman inside” and reveals his/her identity publicly. Consequently, he ensures to undergo sex reassignment surgery to fulfill and complete being a woman. It is concluded that after having two identities as Einar and Lili and acting two gender roles as a man and a woman,

Einar openly demonstrated his sexual orientation by choosing to be a woman.

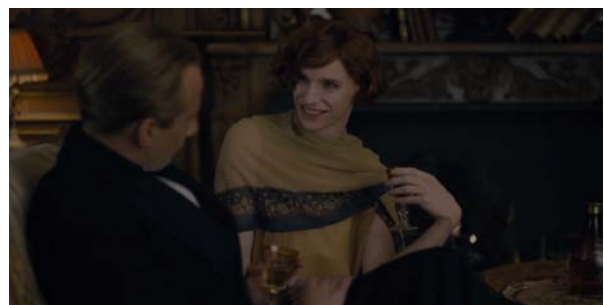
### 3. Exploration

Exploration refers to the stage of “experimenting with a new sexual identity” (Coleman 55). In this stage, LGBTQ+ explore ways of meeting others and learning new interpersonal skills.



**Picture 10. Exploration stage scene depicting Lili learning woman behaviors and manners**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Einar seeks to improve his performance as a woman and learn the moves, postures, and gestures. This can be analyzed using Butler's performativity as in this scene Einar/ Lili performs his male role to enter the place “Red Light District” to view a naked woman. While Gerda is outside, Einar visits the red-light district. He stands there watching a woman undress nude. However, instead of becoming aroused by her, he begins to imitate her moves. This evidence shows that he learns how to act and behave as a woman so that he can imitate women's manners properly.



**Picture 11. Exploration stage scene depicting Lili meeting her old friend named Han**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Einar is dressed as Lili when Gerda and his old friend named Hans who he kissed when he was a kid arrives at the home. Gerda explains that Lili is Einar's cousin. Lili tries to flirt with Hans, but he knows that Lili is Einar. Then, Lili realized that Hans knows her, so she runs off. When Hans leaves, Lili attempts to reassure herself by asking Gerda if Hans hasn't picked up on her identity as Einar. Gerda tells Lili that Hans did not know about it. Therefore, this scene shows that Lili completely lives as female as she wishes. She meets a boy who she has a crush on when she was young and dares to flirt a man in her new gender identity, transgender.



**Picture 12. Exploration stage scene depicting Lili being assaulted**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

When Lili is outside, she is verbally abused by two local French men. They find out Einar (Lili) is different from a normal guy because he has woman behavior such as his walk and personality, so they want to attack him. Lili is called a homosexual and asked if she had male sexual organs. She hits one of them when she is confronted, but the other retaliates by severely beating Lili. The scene illustrates that even though she obtains positive responses from Gerda, she is still rejected her identity by negative responses from society. A person is required to dress, behave, and present oneself in line with heteronormativity by following social norms. Lili, who deviated from the norm, would be seen as inappropriate and alienated, so she is assaulted. According to Picture 10, the group shot is employed in The Danish Girl to “create

visualizing an important concept and/or recurring theme.” This scene emphasizes the difficulty of the coming out process. Due to social norms, being LGBTQ+ is not easy since men are expected to behave as male gender and women are expected to behave as female gender properly. In addition, this shot shows the Einar's eyes level who is laying on the ground, conveying the struggle and unsafe feeling as he gets physical. Consequently, the group shot is used to showcase social rejection during the coming-out process. As seen in Figure 10, Lili is assaulted by two men since she is LGBTQ+.



**Picture 13. Exploration stage scene depicting Lili working as a sales clerk and meeting clients and new people**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

While Lili has negative responses from society, she also has positive ones, and she can live her life entirely as a woman in the ways she wants. Lili completely deleted Einar's self and became a different person. She works as a saleswoman in the perfume department of a store. In the scene, she gives the client some tips on applying the perfume that sprayed it into the air and then went inside; this tip is well received. This scene shows that she experiments with various ways of meeting people and developing new interpersonal skills such as greeting.

#### **4. First Relationship**

When LGBTQ+ believe they can love and be loved, they are prepared to go on to the next stage of first relationships. There is a desire for steadier and committed relationships as they have a strong

sense of personal appeal and competency; as a result, they believe they are ready for a relationship. In this stage, intimacy becomes the most crucial requirement to be achieved.



**Picture 14. First relationship stage scene depicting Lili being with Henrik**  
(The Danish Girl, 2015)

Lilli realizes that she has the capability to love and be loved, so she goes with Henrik frequently. They meet more regularly since they have been dating for a while. This scene illustrates that Lili dares to have a relationship as she publicly flirted with Henrik. Therefore, this suggests that Lilli has reached stage 4 of the coming-out process since she is ready for a relationship. A two-shot technique is found in The Danish Girl as seen in Figure 12. Through body language, blocking, and composition in the frame, two shots indicate developing the relationship's dynamic. Every aspect of this shot's composition, from their body language to their position within the frame, is utilized to illustrate the intimacy between Lili and Henrik.

### 5. Integration

This stage focuses on relationships that are typically successful because LGBTQ+ feel secure in their ability to maintain a long-term committed relationship. Even though Lili has a first relationship with Henrik, she does not entirely establish the first relationship since her mind is more on the sex reassignment surgery. Instead, she prioritizes being completely woman by sex reassignment surgery which leads to discontinuing the relationship. In addition, Lili says

that she is not romantically involved with Henrik since she is a homosexual. It is concluded that the transgender character has arrived at stages 1, 2, 3, and 4; however, he/she has not reached stage 5. Therefore, since the transgender character does not live a longer life to meet stage 5, the integration stage does not exist in the coming-out process in The Danish Girl.

In the final analysis, throughout the coming out process, Einar performs two gender roles: Einar as a man and Lili as a woman. Einar is a man at the very first during the pre-coming out stage, as seen in Figure 1. However, after experiencing woman stuff such as putting on stockings and dressing as a woman, as seen in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5, Einar soon discovers his actual identity. He struggles with revealing his identity which causes him to have an argument with Gerda, as seen in Figure 6. All that Einar has faced leads him to consider his body, as seen in Figure 7. In the coming-out stage, Einar reveals his/her identity to Gerda as well as the doctor, as seen in Figure 8. When Einar is going to be Lili, he dresses and acts like a woman, so he decides to undergo sex reassignment, as shown in Figure 9. After the surgery, Lili enters to exploration stage as she continues to learn to live as a woman by learning from female prostitutes, as shown in Figure 10. While men assault Lili due to his identity shown in Figure 11, she still enjoys living her life working as a sales clerk and meeting new people shown in Figure 12. In the first relationship stage, she has a relationship with Henrik, shown in Figure 13, yet she has not reached the integration stage since he focuses on her surgery series. Unfortunately, she died after her second surgery. Therefore, Einar (Lili) has entered stages 1, 2, 3, and 4. Thus, gender performativity is emphasized through Einar's (Lili) psychological insights through acting double identities. A developmental model of the coming-out process helps understand the feeling and identity formation of the transgender character, while Butler's gender performative helps understand the genders that the transgender character

performs during the coming-out process. Besides, frame size techniques found in *The Danish Girl* are medium close-up shot, medium-long shot, long shot, group shot, and two-shot technique. These techniques help understand the coming-out process through body language, blocking, composition, surrounding area, and facial expression of the transgender character, Einar (Lili) portrayed in the movie.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are numerous studies conducted on Einar Wegener in *The Danish Girl* regarding the transgender phenomena and the influence of genderless on fashion. This research, however, focuses on the transgender character, Einar, in the film version of *The Danish Girl*. The purpose of this research is to explore how the transgender character, Lili Elbe, comes out and to explicate what cinematic frame size techniques help portray the coming-out process of the transgender character, Lili Elbe, in *The Danish Girl*. The theoretical framework of Coleman's coming-out process model was done as a research approach. It was found that Lili gets through stage 1 (pre-coming out), stage 2 (coming out), stage 3 (exploration), and stage 4 (first relationship). However, she could not reach stage 5 (integration).

Furthermore, Butler argues that transgender people are influenced by a variety of variables, including socially constructed and performative attributes. This leads to sex reassignment surgery; it demonstrates that Einar intended to alter both his personality and his physical appearance. Butler's gender performative helps understand the genders that Einar performs during the coming-out process.

Besides, Mercado's cinematic frame size technique is used as a tool to insist that each scene conveys the meaning of the coming-out process. The cinematic frame size techniques: medium close-up shot, medium-long shot, long shot, group shot, and two shot were found in the film as frame size techniques helping portray the coming-out process. Thus, it is intriguing to discover more about the LGBTQ+ characters in other films in future studies as it can be interesting to explore different perspectives from researchers in the field of film studies such as studies of focal length of lens, depth of field, and composition which would give a more profound analysis in terms of cinematic elements (Waitayasin et al, 2019).



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