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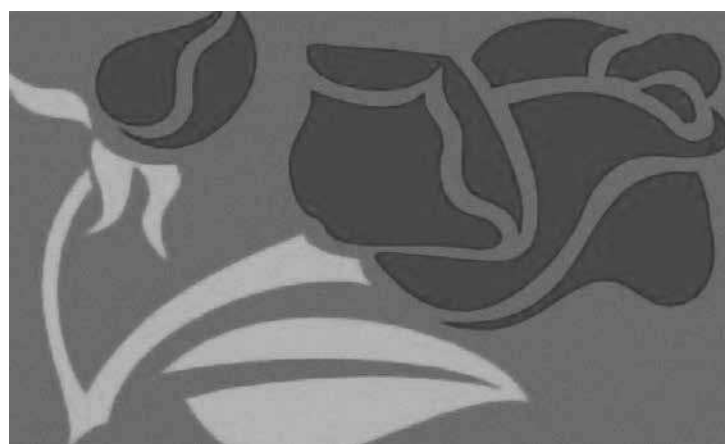
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Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



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Transitioning into Lili

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a time when there was no concept of transgender identity for either Einar or Gerda to grab onto. How does one manage when compelled toward inward truth for which there is no outward confirmation? We journey through visits to doctors who prescribe painful radiation treatment and diagnose insanity. With no one to offer Einar a way to process or analyze the truth that compels him, he forges ahead, transitioning into Lili before transitioning was a concept. Indeed, with no signposts to guide her, Lili tumbles to the conclusion -- which now seems heart-breakingly brutal and unnecessary -- that Einar must die in order for Lili to live.

A lesser film would have relied more on exposition to explain what is happening; this one admirably shows more than it tells. Redmayne conveys how Lili's fear competes with her excitement as she flirts with a man whose attention she has attracted, and then retreats; her schemes for studying how women shift their weight or ask a question; the small ways in which transitioning to female requires Einar to give up power. In a particularly affecting scene, we see in Redmayne's body and face how acutely it pains Lili to take off her wig, revealing Einar underneath. She has no access to a means for reconciling Einar as part of Lili, and her distaste for Einar becomes increasingly palpable.

The toll on Einar/Lili's relationship with Gerda is also thoughtful-

ly portrayed. Einar is blessed with a spouse who genuinely loves him and is capable of making much of the journey with and for Lili. Indeed, Lili becomes a regular subject of Gerda's portraiture, earning Gerda professional notice and subtly assisting in Lili's transition. It makes sense that both of them were artists; only highly intuitive people could find a way to venture into and make sense of such complex psychological territory. Yet, increasingly, Gerda finds herself losing her formerly attentive partner, even at times finding herself rather cruelly abandoned. All of Lili's energies are absorbed in the task of becoming herself; her very idea of womanhood in 1920s Europe contains little room for Gerda.

No matter how much this portrayal may veer from the historical record about Einar/Lili and Gerda, it is profoundly true in the deepest sense. This film is a worthy window into early identity formation for a transgender woman -- indeed, Lili Elbe's journal eventually became important in that regard. But it is also resonates with wisdom and empathy for those important few whose lives call them to the lonely and confusing work of scouting ahead for where the rest of us must and will eventually evolve.

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. Find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.



Portland's 'Wader the Gator' issues a fitness challenge.

Water Warrior Club Returns

Portland Parks & Recreation presents the 15th Annual Water Warrior Club this January for community members that love to swim. The city's six indoor pools will be hosting "Where's Wader the Gator" fitness challenges for lap swim and water exercise participants.

Swimmers that complete at least 16 workouts in the month of January will receive a free a Water Warrior t-shirt along with the obvious health-benefits of swimming regularly. Participants can chart their progress at their neighborhood pool. For more information, visit portlandparks.org.



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