THE REFLECTION OF LESBIANISM
AND AMERICAN HOMOPHOBIC SOCIETY
AS SEEN THROUGH THE FILM BOYS DON’T CRY

THESIS

Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of Requirement
for the Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Department

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*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

“Life is best played without a script”
I dedicate this thesis to:

Bapak and Emak

I know you are the best
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, praise be to Allah the Lord of the universe for His Kindness, His Patient and His Mercy to save all human who believe in Him., and for His entire blessing to give me enough time to finish this thesis. Thank to Muhammad SAW, my best Uswah, for Your guide into Islam, You have brought a guide for Rahmatan lilalamin.

I would also like to thank these following important persons: the Dean of Faculty of Letters and Fine Arts Dr. Maryono Dwi Raharjo, SU. for approving this thesis; the Head of English Department Drs. Riyadi Santosa, M.Ed for his helping hand that supports the finishing of this thesis; my first consultant Dra. Tri Retno Pudyastuti M. Hum. for her patience, care and understanding that make me able to pass my hard time in finishing this thesis; my second consultant Dra. Sri Kusumo Habsari, M.Hum. and also Dra. Zita Rarastesa, MA. for guiding this thesis into its perfection; and my academic consultant Dra. Endang Sri Astuti, MS. for her cares and attentions.

I would like to give my best gratitude to my father and mother: Really I know everything about life and wisdom from you…. , I know that life is a struggle. I have promised you something that make you proud of me, I will never disappoint you, I will try. The family under your guide is a heaven for me.

Thank to Togar my brother (Hi, get up guy, you are a man now), and my sister Laili (be sure with your way). Both of you are the sun shine of my life. And my love is also sent all my family in Cilegon, Banten; Pakde, Bude, Tetehe,
Kakang, and Mamang, I miss you all. To Anne, (dear “stubborn” girl), thanks for giving me many reasons to be stronger.

My best regard and gratitude to all my friends in PMII (The Indonesian Moslem Student Movement of Surakarta); Naeni, Tri, Roy, Wiwin, Ani (Perhaps we can meet in our Pesanggrahan); Inok, Ika, Aa, Udin, Obat, Adib, Ninik, dik Islah, Catur, Ipunk, Tyas, Nurul, Khoirudin, (Keep fighting for Mustada’afin); TO ALL MY SENIOR OF PMII (thanks for the lesson), And all my friends in PMII Kentingan (Tangan Terkepal Dan Maju); for all the friends in Graha Enlightenment Guntur 46, Maul (keep on your dream with me for”N”). Mathori (I hate your guitar), Rangga (Diet is the best). Thanks for all togetherness in trust.

I give my best love to all my friends of ED97_ers; Habib ‘Kaboel’ Rifa’i (Kaboel is always Kaboel), Andi “fiat” Mualiawan (Still you can find another Siti), Mas’ud ‘panic’ Fahlafi (How is your family), Triono ‘Petruk’ WS (my best room mate), Roy ‘bethon’ Sajiwo (The best lurah), ‘Memet’ Farhani, Dwi ratno ‘Gepenk’ Kurniawan, Teguh Di canio, Hasan “Kuda” Ismail, Rustaman, Paul, Elia ‘elek” Setaiwan; And all the girls in English Dept. 97, May, Utjay, Yani, Yurike, Tiara, Marita, Novita, Denok, Prita, Utik, Nurma, Nur, Trimbil, Nina, Suryani, Rina, Mala………………(sorry not to mention you all) thanks for all the happiness. Forgive me for loving (one of) you, forgive me for hating you, but I’ll never forget you for all my life.

Thanks also to my PATTIRO_es in Solo, Pak Rofik, Setyo, Diani, Udin, Ickwan.; from you all I learned that there must be a hope for something we are fighting for. Thanks to INRES, LESKAP and KOMPIP for the computer.
The last but not least, I do realize that this thesis is far from being perfect. Therefore, I will gladly appreciate and accept criticism. I hopefully wish that this thesis will be useful for those who are interested in American Studies, especially in film studies or broadly popular cultural studies.

Surakarta, 5 April 2003

Ahmad Rifa’i
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ABSTRACT

Ahmad Rifa’i : “The Reflection of Lesbianism and American Homophobic Society as Seen Through the Film Boys Don’t Cry”.

This thesis is a library or referential study. It is a film study based on sociological and cultural studies approach. The thesis uses the semiotic approach to analyze the film and to find out the description about lesbianism and American Homophobic society. It also uses sociological approach to give a clear description about American social life. The objectives of the study are to find out the reflection of lesbianism in America and the reflection of American homophobic society in the film Boys Don’t Cry.

Semiotic approach is used in this thesis to analyze any information from the film, which is considered as signs, to find out myth or ideological meaning behinds the information. By using this approach, the researcher can find out the phenomena of lesbianism and American homophobic society in the film. The researcher finds that the film clearly describes the phenomena of lesbianism through the characterization of Brandon Teena and Lana Tisdel. Supported by sociological aspects of American society, the researcher describes lesbianism as an American phenomena (social and cultural).

In finding out the phenomena of homophobic society in the film, the researcher analyses the character of John Lotter, Thomas Nissen, Lana’s Mom, and Candace in perceiving Brandon and Lana’s lesbian behaviors. The researcher also analyses ‘Falls City’ social life as a sociological and cultural setting of the film, to find out the description of American society especially in perceiving the phenomena of lesbianism. The researcher also analyzes the theme song and original soundtrack.

Based on the analysis of Teena and Lana’s behaviors, other character’s responses, cultural setting and the soundtrack, the researcher finds that there are some paradoxes in American social life, particularly concerning to the phenomena of lesbianism. Boys Don’t Cry portrays the life of rural people, which are economically depressed and frustrated. Rural community lives in poverty with high rate of criminality and they used to perceive social phenomena (Lesbianism) conservatively, just like Falls City to perceive Brandon. Most American people, as seen through the film, are homophobic in perceiving lesbianism. Moreover, the researcher also finds out that homophobia has already rooted in American culture. Homophobia also takes many forms by which it is infiltrated to the American society. Homophobia can take personal forms, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. The phenomenon of Homophobia is a proof that the ideology of heterosexism is absolutely strong among American society.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In the end of 19th century, America appeared as the modern big country and nation. America was not merely a nation with long historical experiences, but it is also a nation with a complex and heterogeneous characters along with its line of history. The long historical experiences, high level of heterogeneity of ethnic and culture have made America a mature society. The process which is full of conflicts and consensus is the beginning for the society with strong social concept, politic and economy. Entering the 20th century, as the modern era, America was recognized as a great parable of big modern nation; the mobility of its people, the cultural pluralism of the society, the sense of independence from the past, the amazing technological growth, _all of this has encouraged mobility, ethnic sexual and psychological openness to develop and change. During the era of stability (Post War), America has transformed itself into a super power nation. The influence of American commerce, cultural products, lifestyles, social attitudes and political aims has been great, and affected many traditional cultures. America has not just been an economic and technological power behind modern change; it has been an avant-garde image of life in an age of acceleration.

Concerning with the study of American identities and experiences, what becomes the main focus is that America must be viewed as a society which cannot be seen from single point of view, due to the complexity of American society it self.
Talking about America maintains many aspects in society such as politic and governments, culture, law, economy, education, slavery and so on. To study America is to understand America as being viewed from many aspects of its society. Many experts agreed that by studying an aspect of American society as well as the other aspects as part of the whole America might be possible. Because of various disciplines, trainings and backgrounds to employ, the approaches that are offered are different and came from many fields of study. The fields could be history, sociology, economics, political science, social psychology, law, international relations, literary study, film studies, art history and iconography.

In the field of culture and literature, there are particular reasons of the importance of American Study. First, the development of American culture has showed an expressive growth both in range of serious “high” and “popular” culture. Furthermore, American popular culture has become the major part of America’s domination and hegemony of culture in the world of globalization. Popular culture cannot be separated from the practice of capitalism for it provokes the appearance of consumerism society. The interrelation of popular culture, consumerism and capitalism, in conclusion, is then becoming the most important point in this study. Popular culture will be able to represent American culture by pointing out directly to basic foundation of American culture that is capitalism. It is, of course, related closely to its proponent system such as social order, philosophy, politic, and law. It cannot be denied that American commercial business nowadays is concentrated on popular culture in which Hollywood movies, television, Satellite and cyber, telecommunication and mass media become its main pillar.
However, American popular culture on the one hand has business orientation such as being explained above with capital accumulation as the ultimate goal. On the other hand, it can be a reflection of social condition and phenomena although it is covered in the terms of culture and lifestyle promotion. It is unfair assuming American popular culture as merely product of commerce by ignoring its great system of value, norms, and philosophy.

A film is one of popular culture products that is collectively used by many people. Moreover, its messages and contents are able to cross through territory and time limits. A film can be viewed from the side of business orientation and its impacts to the society (consumers) therefore cultural studies approach will be suitable to understand this, whereas, a film can also be viewed critically as reflection of social condition for the movie has presumed as a set of symbolic texts for socio-psychological mythical interpretation.

Boys Don’t Cry is an American film, which is produced in 1999. Its script writing is written by Kimberly Peirce and Andy Beinan based on the story of Teena Brandon. It is distributed by Fox Searchlight and casted by Hillary Swank (as Teena Brandon), Chloe Sevigny (as Lana, the girl friend of Teena), Peter Sasgaard, Brenda Sexton III, Allison Folland, Alicia Goranson and Jeanetta Arnette. The Film told us the story of Teena Brandon, 21 year old young woman undergoing hormone therapy in preparation for sex change operation. Teena Brandon left her native Lincoln, Nebraska when her secret is discovered, for small town of Falls City, where no one knows and she is free to live full time as Brandon. In Falls City, s/he met Lana and fall in love. S/he also met Tom Nissen and John Lotter who then kill
her in December 30, 1993 after her secret is discovered. Peirce beautifully builds up many conflicts among the characters and this film described the type of relation between Teena and his own identities and between Teena and the society.

On December 30, 1993 in Falls City, Nebraska, two men, John Lotter and Tom Nissen, shot and killed 21-year old Teena Brandon, along with two of her friends, Lisa Lambert and Philip Devine. Brandon had been living as a man ("Brandon Teena") for a number of years, and had presented herself as such to Lotter and Nissen, with whom she became friendly. When they learned the truth, they reacted violently, humiliating Brandon in front of his girlfriend, Lana, then kidnapping and raping her. After Brandon reported the incident to the police, Lotter and Nissen resorted to murder. Because of the lurid details surrounding the case (sex, lesbianism, a woman masquerading as a man), the "Teena Brandon/Brandon Teena murder" fed national news headlines, so there's not much mystery about how Boys Don't Cry, a slightly fictionalized account of the story, ends.¹

In 1993, in Falls City, Nebraska, Teena Brandon tried to re-invent her self into her own fantasy. In the end she failed, but not before she impacted the lives of many peoples. Boys Don’t Cry is flamed but courageous to bring some meaning to that real life tragedy.

This is the mystery that first drew filmmaker Kimberly Peirce. "Here was a character who was already becoming an icon within months after being killed, Brandon Teena represented so many strands of our culture -- he was a

¹ James Bernadelli, Boys Don’t Cry Film Review, 1999, 9 March 2000 (www.movie-reviews.colossus.net/movies/b/boys_don’t. html)
female to male, he was a petty thief, he was the victim of a hate crime -- he was being written about by true crime writers, journalists and feminists. There was no disputing that his story was dramatic and tragic, but the real challenge in telling it was finding the human being underneath it all, discovering what it was like to be inside Brandon's skin the very first night he passed as boy. When you think about who he was and begin to see how extraordinary what he did was, just how powerful his spirit, imagination and creativity had to have been. The more the story unfolded, the more I found that the simple fact that this person actually existed was completely compelling. Figuring out what was going on inside of him and making sense of how he had created himself into his fantasy of a guy, how he managed to find a place in so many people's lives and why he provoked such intense reprisal was worth as many years as it took to figure it out.²

**Boys Don’t Cry** describes clearly the sides of life involving sex, **lesbianism and homophobia**. When Teena Brandon started to live in Falls City, she falls in love with Lana, event she wants to marry her and lives happily. The film shows us the responses of society, which harmed Teena, and the climax is the rape and murder of Teena by Tom Nissen and John Lotter. There is a values clash in the society perceiving a phenomenon of lesbianism and trans gendered people.

**Boys don’t Cry**, as being mentioned above, describes the side of life involving sex, lesbianism and homophobia. The attitudes of Brandon and Lana as the main characters can be analyzed to get clear description of lesbianism.

Symbolically, *Boys Don’t Cry* in its speech (script) and its visual narrative on the screen contain many symbols and signs that consider a deep analysis to understand it. It represents the side of lesbianism in a less vulgar way because of its homophobic aspect. Lesbianism is a phenomenon as a turning point of the history of sexuality of American societies. In the beginning of 20th centuries, discourse about sexuality has come to America from Europe. The coming of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, through G. Stanley Hall in a conference in University of Clark is the starting point of the era of open sexuality and destruction of the old concept of Victorian sexuality. Heterosexuality was then being questioned, and homosexuality and lesbianism opened the discourse of sexuality among society within some homophobic atmosphere. The love story of Teena and Lana and its dilemma describes how this problem faced the homophobic society.

Based on the above statement, it is interesting to analyze *Boys Don’t Cry* through the phenomena of lesbianism as social phenomena in American society. Cultural setting where this case happened gives us sociological understanding about the reality and American society, moreover, the film based on the true stories.

### B. Scope of The Study

To focus the analysis and to avoid the deviation, and based on the background above, the researcher needs to give some limitation. The researcher limits his analysis on some fundamental aspects such as attitudes, behaviors, ideas, way of thinking, and also physical appearance of the main character, Teena Brandon and
Lana Tisdell, which lead to the description of phenomena of lesbianism and the homophobic condition of American society.

To support the main focus, the researcher studies the sociological aspect of American society, Anthropological and Cultural behaviors including the phenomena of lesbianism in America, during the end of nineteenth century in connection to the case of Teena Brandon.

**C. Problem Statement**

Since the focus of analysis is to find out the attitudes, behaviors, way of thinking, and also physical appearances that leads to the description of lesbianism and homophobia in America, the researcher bases on some fundamental questions:

1. How does *Boys Don’t Cry* assert the Lesbian behaviors of Teena Brandon and Lana Tisdell?
2. How does *Boys Don’t Cry* reflect the characters’ response toward Teena’s sexual identity and her relationship with Lana?
3. How does *Boys Don’t Cry* reflect the Lesbianism phenomenon and the homophobic condition of American society?

**D. Objectives of The Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out how the film describes the aspect of Lesbianism through the attitude of Teena Brandon and Lana.
2. To find out how the film reflects lesbianism in America.
3. To find out how the film reflects the response of American Society toward Lesbianism as Homophobic condition.

E. Benefits of The Study

In accordance with the explanation above, the purpose of the study is to know and to describe the social condition of American Society in connection with the lesbianism reflected in *Boys Don’t Cry*. Hopefully, it will give much benefit in understanding American culture and can give contribution to women movement in Indonesia. There are also some aims expected by the researcher:

1. To give a contribution on understanding American society, culture and its experience.
2. To give additional information that can be used by the next researcher especially American Study in Sebelas Maret University.

F. Theoretical Approach

In order to make the analysis more rigid and liable, the researcher will use some approaches as far as the validity of the analysis can be reached.

The researcher uses some fundamental theories and approaches in the research as follows:

1. **Holistic Approach**

   Holistic approach is based on the understanding that American culture is not merely a single thing to be called cultural identity. The complexity of its cultural experiences has placed the study of American Culture to be
concerned heterogeneous. Historically, American society built themselves supported by the heterogeneity of ethnic, different tradition of each ethnic, and different philosophy. Spiller describes this diversity as follows:

But the American culture we then knew was shattered in fragments, each taught in our universities as a part of some other part of culture and discipline; American literature as a dialect of English literature; American art as a denigration of the great tradition of the art of Renaissance Italy; American history as a branch of the great mercantile explorations of the 15\textsuperscript{th} and the 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries; American political theory as a product of British and French rationalism; American economics as a re-enactment on the frontier of the European war between agrarianism and industrialism; American society as a corruption of the pure white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition by ‘foreigners’ American civilization, or culture, as a thing in itself did not seem to exist.\textsuperscript{3}

In order to give a definite explanation and formulation of using Holistic Approach, Spiller makes some ways to be considered based on his experiences of analyzing American culture. He gives four ways including the applications of each step. The first is the application to the American field of new concepts, materials, and methods of cultural and comparative-cultural study in the disciplines of sociology and cultural anthropology. The second is concerned to the modern literature and art. Spiller states the application of

psychology, folk and popular expression, the archetypal myths, faiths and traditional religion. The third, in the field of history, Spiller suggests the use of many areas involving traditional disciplines. The fourth is the application of individual work of art, biographical and psychological study supported by any other disciplines to study the development of philosophy and practice of literary history and historical criticism.

In the connection to this research, which gives its analysis in the field of popular culture particularly film, the second way of Spiller’s Holistic Approach will be appropriate to apply in this study.

The application of advances in depth psychology, folk, and popular expression and the archetypal myth and faiths or traditional religion, supernaturalism and imagination to modern literature and art. Archeology, anthropology, and the histories of religion, tribal custom and philosophy all contribute to such study, and the cultures finally defined in terms of man’s dream, illusions and the realities of his non-world.  

2. **Sociological Approach**

Film as a part of American literature can also reflect the social condition of American society. Since this researcher wants to find out the social aspect of literature and popular expression, the application of sociological approach would be appropriate. Basically, literary work is the

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result of the author’s imagination and also it reveals the reality of human life or society in general. Milton C. Albrecht states in *The Sociology of Literature*, literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, the process of class struggle, and certain types of social facts.⁵

In the case of American Study, Literature means all the products of culture. Film as a product of (popular) culture is a part of American literature, it is a text of culture. Like other text, film reveals the social reality circulating in the society. A film, or a text, or a culture, or a literature cannot be understood without totality of life in the society.

The main term in the Sociology of literature is a reflection of society. The text reflects the social condition including the aspirations of the society, hopes, and wishes. Sociological approach belongs to extrinsic approach. It emphasizes the sociological aspect of a work, as a way to connect the work to the social background of a work.

In *Toward Sociology of the Novel*, Lucien Goldman states, “I have called a word view, a view that the group does not therefore create, but whose constituent elements it elaborates (and it alone can elaborate) and the energy that makes it possible to bring them together”⁶ He notices that the great writer or an artist is the exceptional individual who is successful to create a literary work, an imaginary, coherent world or almost strictly world.

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3. **Semiotic Approach**

The researcher also considers the semiotic approach particularly the *Roland Barthes’s semiology* in order to find out *myth*, in his works *Mythologies*, Barthes is concerned to analyze myth circulating in the contemporary society, the false representation and erroneous beliefs current in the France of the postwar period. Myth as being viewed by Barthes is not the ancient story of holy Goddess; it is a *type of speech*. The existence of myth is culturally controlled as a ‘*re-presentation*’; it represents the thing, which’s (actually) historical and cultural seems to be natural in the term of discourse. Re-presentation is a process to find out the covert meaning begins by making explicit the meaning of apparently neutral objects and then moves on to consider the social and historical conditions they obscure. In Semiotic system, Myth is usually called by ‘the second order semiotic system’, which plays in discourse field. In Language, as the first order semiotic system, *signifiant* or *signifier* is connected to *signifie* or *signified* which produces a *sign*. In the term of *Peircean* this process is called *Signification*. The sign in the first order related to the sign in the second order, and myth is in the second order during the process of *Significations*.

Semiotic also gives the fundamental way of reading a text in which the readers as the center of meaning, it gives readers the authority to determine the meaning. Barthes called the *death of the author*. In his *The Pursuit of Signs*, Culler gives the explanation to this:

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The reader becomes the name of the place where the various codes can be located; a virtual site. Semiotics attempts to make explicit the implicit knowledge which enables signs to have meaning. So it needs the reader not as a person but as a function; the repository of the codes which account for the intelligibility of the text. Because literary works do have meaning for readers, semiotics undertakes to describe the system of convention responsible for those meanings.

The researcher assumes that the film consists of many signs and symbols. Sign and symbols covertly reveal the meaning. To find out the covert meaning, the researcher assumes that the film is telling not only words or sentences, but it also represents social meanings involving behaviors, attitudes, way of life and even ideology. Here, semiology of Roland Barthes plays a role, it will identify the signs and pick them out. As literary symbolism, it contains a variety sequence of meanings seems inescapable. It can represent both in ward and outward aspects. In the term of semiotic system, the first order is in ward aspect of film and the second is out ward. The external meaning of symbol, which is usually connected with real life.

In his *Anatomy of Criticism; Ethical Criticism; the Theory of Symbols*, Frye stated:

… symbol (…) means any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention. A word, a phrase, or an image used with some kind of special reference (which is what a symbol is usually taken

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to mean) is all symbols when they are distinguishable elements in critical analysis. Even the letters a writer spells his words with form part of his symbolism in this sense; they would be isolated only in special cases, such as alliteration or dialect spellings, but we are still aware that they symbolize sounds. Criticism as a whole, in terms of this definition, would begin with, and largely consist of, the systematizing of literary symbolism.  

G. Method of The Study

This study is a Library or referential study. It means that the researcher uses all possibilities by reading many references to collect data and to gather more information in supporting the study. He uses biography, encyclopedia and much information from the books or from mass media.

In the term Geisteswissenschaften, the method are based on theoretical and philosophical analysis, which is connected to the norms and values in the society. This kind of analysis involves texts and contexts, as the main material it is of course included social practices, norms, values and ideology.

The data processing phases are directed as follows;

a. Description phase

The problem is exposed along with the selected data and is classified in the relation to the topic.

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b. Analysis phase

The fundamental theory of this research is applied in this phase.

c. Interpretation phase

In this phase, the results of the analysis taken from previous phase are crystallized based on the problem statement and the objectives.

d. Evaluation phase

The researcher evaluates and examines the results.

H. Technique of Collecting Data

1. Main data: It is taken from the film as the main source. The data consists of dialogues, the music and song, Characterization, movements and its motion picture.

2. Supporting data: it is collected from other sources such as references, review of the film, production notes and also criticism taken from other books.

I. Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of four chapters and each of them is subdivided into subsequent divisions. The thesis is arranged as follows:

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, Scope of the study, Problem statement, objective and benefits of the study, theoretical approach which contains
four fundamental approaches: holistic, sociology, semiotic and feminist approach. It also presents method of the study and the data.

CHAPTER II LITERARY REVIEW

This chapter discusses two fundamental theories in the connection to film study. The first is Semiotics in film study. It also gives the explanation of Lesbianism and Homophobia. In the last part, it presents the American Social condition of 1990-1999 including the condition of American family.

CHAPTER III ANALYSIS

It consists of the analysis of the film starting from the aspect of lesbianism in the film and is divided in two major discussions: Teena Brandon’s Lesbian Behaviors and Lana Tisdel’s Lesbian Behaviors and also about the relationship between both. The second part of this chapter discusses the response of characters in the film toward Teena’s sexual identity and her lesbian relationship with Lana. The rest will discuss the homophobic condition of American society that is reflected in the film.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the conclusion of the Analysis, and recommendation and also closing.
CHAPTER II

LITERARY REVIEW

A. Semiotic Film Theory

Semiotic in the film theory becomes the main concern in the contemporary discussion of mass culture, since Roland Barthes continued the work of Saussure by using Semiology as a means of analysis to study social phenomenon especially mass culture. Through the Mythologies (1957) he shows that it is possible to read everyday life as full of meanings. He gives much attention to mass culture, la culture de masse: films, advertising, newspapers and magazines, photographs, cars, children’s toys, and so on. A few decades later, the semiotics has spread out and has been used in many aspects of analysis. Some experts follow Barthes to use semiotics: Julia Kristeva (1969), Jonathan Culler (1981), Umberto Eco (1976).
Semiotics can be said as the continuation of Saussure’s Structuralism. In 1916, Ferdinand de Saussure introduced *Course in General Linguistic*, the study of language that will give much contribution to the contemporary film theory. He established the basic foundation of structuralism. Saussure divided the study of language into *Diachronic*, at its changing forms across history; and *Synchronic*, how language works at a given moment as a rule governed system. He also introduced the distinctions between *langue* and *parole*, between *signifier* and *signified*. What anyone utter, the writing and speech are called parole but “…the system of particular language allowing someone to generate a meaningful sentence, according to the rule for word-formation and sentence structure…”\(^{10}\), constitutes langue. Signifier is made up from the sounds used by particular language and signified consist of the concept or meanings assigned to any organization of signifiers. When signifier and signified are joined together they form a sign.

Saussure predicted that one day there would be a science that studies the life of signs within society and is named semiology. He was right, his great work on structuralism theory has a great impact on the development of other theories concerning with the study of language and sign. His theory finally can touch many contemporary thought, including film theory.

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from the Greek semeion ‘sign’) semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since

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\(^{10}\) Kurniawan, *Semiologi Roland Barthes*, (Magelang: Yayasan Indonesia Tera, 2001), p.25
the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will be circumscribing a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts.\textsuperscript{11}

Roland Barthes, the French Critic, developed for the first time a new method of analysis using semiotic. Through his work \textit{Mythologies} he introduced an analysis of new contemporary popular culture, especially advertising, television and cinema. The Roland Barthes’ semiotic considers exclusively to the myth. Myth, here, is not the ancient of holy Goddess; it is a type of speech. According to Barthes, what is called by \textit{discourse} is actually the parole in broad definition, in other word, myth is a type of discourse. The existence of myth is culturally controlled as a \textit{re-presentation}; it represents the thing, which is (actually) cultural and historical seems to be natural in the term of discourse. In semiotic system, myth is usually called the \textit{second order semiotic system} that plays in discourse field. In language, as the first order semiotic system, signifier is connected to signified to produce a sign. This process is called signification. The sign in the first order relating to the sign in the second order, and myth is in the second order during the process of signification. The signifier in the second order semiotic system, as the material aspect, is called \textit{Rhetoric}; and the signified becomes (fragmented) \textit{ideology}. Ideology is possible to say as the synonym of \textit{myth} used by Barthes for it refers to

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid}, p.14
the body of belief and representations that sustain and legitimate current power relationships. Myth or ideology promotes the values and interest of dominant groups within society.

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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
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<td>Myth</td>
<td>I. SIGNIFIER</td>
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In 1960s, Barthes introduced the distinction between denotation and connotation to differentiate literal representation from its hidden symbolic and ideological meaning. How, then, will semiotic be used to analyze the myth?. We can imagine how large and varied the manifestation of myth in our life. Myth can be viewed as anonymous discourse such as; news papers, flag, advertisement, window display, photograph, traffic light, film, monuments and so on. Barthes gave a familiar example in doing the analysis:

At the barber shop Barthes reads a copy of Paris-Match. On the cover, a young black African in French uniform is shown saluting something out of the photograph, presumably the French flag. Barthes suggests that the photograph conceals a hidden meaning, which can be revealed if the image is analyzed in terms of signifier and signified. Thus the shapes and colors of the flat photographic surface form one set of signifiers, which denote a ‘literal’ meaning (a young man in uniform is saluting). But the sign (signifier plus signified) itself acts as a new signifier at another level of meaning with a

$^{12}$ Roland Barthes, Mythologies, Trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999) p. 115. Mythologies is a text which is not one but plural. It contains fifty-fours shorts journalistic articles on a variety subjects. The texts were written between 1945 and 1965 for the left-wing magazine Les Lettres Nouvelles and very clearly belong to barthes’s periodic “journalistique”.

signified, which Barthes spells out as: ‘The French empire? It’s just a fact; look at this good Negro who salute like one of our own boys’. Barthes wants to expose the way a familiar visual realism (“This photograph shows what happened on one occasion”) covertly installs an ideological meaning (French imperialism). 

In film, as in language, the relation between the celluloid strip projected onto a screen, the shaped and patterned visual image and what may represent _a house, a tree, a person_ is the relation between signifier and signified. In language, the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary, but in film the relation is iconic and indexical. Iconic is the image resembles what it represents and indexical is the image as effect of a photochemical process caused by what it represents. Therefore, there is no arbitrary relation of signifier and signified in cinema.

A cinematic image of film does not denote a pure literal meaning untouched by culture and codes. It was constructed by human intervention and perception. The reality in the film is about how human perceives reality in particular ways. What we watch _in_ the film, no matter it relies on the iconic and indexical methods, is never the real itself but always a reproduction or re-presentation of the real. The cinematic image _neither pure nor raw but already processed, constructed_ must be thought of as a signifier that stands for something is absent. A cinematic image must be

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treated as cultural construction. The simple example has been given by Metz that a shot of ‘a house’ does not merely mean a house but “here is a house”.\textsuperscript{14}

The process of re-interpretation toward cinematic message happens when the spectator watches the movie on the screen and his knowledge comes together to perceive as reality. A movie spectator is also a reader of a text. As being stated by Barthes about ‘the death of author’, then a reading is a process of making another text, a process of reproduction and re-interpretation. A reader or a spectator by his ‘stock of knowledge’ has a right to re-present and denote the meanings of a text.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{B. Understanding Lesbianism and Homophobia}

1. Lesbianism

Lesbian refers to woman-homosexual. Therefore, explaining lesbianism will always concern with homosexual aspect. In the United States people who have developed “…an identity as a homosexual person typically refer themselves as gay, with women preferring the term lesbian for their sexuality…”\textsuperscript{16} The term lesbian derives from the word “lesbos”; “a native or resident of lesbos ; The ancient Greek dialect of Lesbos, belonging to Aeolic; of or characteristic of Sappho or her poetry. Lesbos is an island of Greece, 632 square miles, in the Aegean off the western coast of Turkey, also called

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. 21.  (Metz also suggest that cinematic message is subject to rules both in 'perception' itself (system for structuring space, 'figures”, and “backgrounds”, etc.), to the degree that it already constitutes a system of acquired intelligibility, which varies according to different “cultures” as well as in 'recognition and identification of visual or auditive objects appearing on the screen _that is to say, the ability (which is also culturally acquired) to manipulate correctly the denoted material of the film’.)

\textsuperscript{15} Jonathan Culler, \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 38
Mytilene”.  Although lesbian refers to homosexual behaviors as well as gay, the development of lesbians’ identity, however, shows many differences comparing to gays development. Lesbian exhibits more variation than gay men in age at which awareness of attraction to individuals of the same sex occurs, and evidence suggests that gay men become aware of same-sex attraction, act on those attraction, and self identity as gay at earlier ages than do lesbian. But Lesbians tend to establish ongoing love relationships earlier than gay men and likely to commit to a homosexual identity within the context of an intense emotional relationship, whereas gay men do so within the context of their sexual experiences. In general, emotional attachment is the most significant aspect of relationship for lesbian, but sexual activity is most important for gay men. Considering the process of identity development, Ponse (1980) states three steps of lesbian identity development: becoming aware of feeling different because of sexual-emotional attraction to another woman, becoming involved in a lesbian relationship, and seeking out other lesbians.

Women, in general, have some reason for being lesbians. Some prefer lesbian for their life style and their ideological choice. Some concern their lesbian life as personal choice. They establish independent identity and find

19 Ibid. p. 131  
20 Ibid. p. 132
homosexuality supportive of this goal, and the others prefer to have their involvement in lesbian as discovery rather than choice.²¹

Lesbian as a case of Homosexuality refers to sexual behaviors, desires, attractions, and relationships among people of the same sex as well as to the culture, identities, and communities associated with them.²² Homosexuality itself has been understood as four kinds of different phenomena. The first, it is used to describe specific sexual acts. Both homosexual and heterosexual behaviors are common throughout human societies (and in many other species) with all cultures regulating the condition under which they are allowed. The second is to refer to enduring pattern of sexual or romantic attraction for partners of one’s own gender, whether or not these preferences are expressed behaviorally. The third is psychological identity, a sense of self defined in term one’s attraction, and finally the fourth is to refer to a minority group of membership.

Understanding lesbianism is not merely a matter of understanding lesbianism as sexual behaviors. It is more complex than that. Lesbian (ism) includes ideological apparatus. Socially, it refers to a social group or membership developed a lesbian identity as the basic ideology of the movement. People with homosexual identity try to identify themselves in a group with a type of membership in order to have a bargaining position toward heterosexual as the major sexual identity. Heterosexual is considered normal among the society and as the contrary homosexuality is considered

²¹ Ibid, p. 132
‘out of normalcy’ and even treated as psychopathology. It can be seen from the treatment of people with HIV, moralistic interpretation of people with AIDS, certain conception about ways in which HIV is transmitted, and media representation of AIDS reinforce a moral view inimical to gay men, lesbians and bisexual.

Lesbianism is a manifesto of lesbian people due to their sexual identity in order to get an equal acknowledgement among the society. It is a matter of being lesbian. They declare their identity as well as the other sexual identity. They may not consider marriage with a woman as they partners but they have openly lived with the homosexual behaviors.

Lesbianism is an overt homosexual relationship between women.

Women, who are married to a man, and even women with children, may occasionally be partners in lesbianism. On the other hand, some women are primarily lesbian and may live in what they consider marriage with their partners. As sexual moves have changed, increasing numbers of lesbian women have proclaimed the right to live their homosexual lives openly.23

In the United States, Lesbian (ism) movement is inimically with the feminism movement. Lesbian is treated unfairly as well as the other women in which feminism promote their advocate action. Lesbianism wants to get an acknowledgement toward lesbian sexual preference and to begin living an openly homosexual.

Feminist issues and ideology were central to lesbians’ lives. Because homosexuality was listed as a crime in most states, lesbians looked to organized feminism for help in protesting the legal discrimination they faced in employment, housing, divorce, and child-custody rulings. Moreover, as women who had rejected traditional female roles, lesbians’ very right to exist openly depended on overcoming sexist attitude and customs. In effect, the lesbian need for social acceptance and self-esteem went to the heart of women’s liberation, raising the question of whether woman in general would be allowed to decide for themselves who they were and how they would live their lives, without being told that they were less than women if their clothes seemed unorthodox.\(^\text{24}\)

Some lesbians prefer to choose their own movement because of their abnormal status between the feminist and the society. In some states in America, lesbianism is still acknowledged as a crime and abnormal. Some feminist and their movement force the lesbian people into a corner of sexual discrimination and call them as being *out of normalcy*.

Yet heterosexual (‘straight”) feminists were slow to support lesbians’ rights. Many of them had prejudiced toward homosexuality and eager to prove that theirs was a movement of ‘normal’ women. By ignoring gay (homosexual) women, they hoped to dispel charges that feminist were

“frustrated man haters”. Some claiming that there were no lesbian among them and refused to discuss lesbian issues.

Lesbian in turn formed their own organization. Some proclaiming the politics of “lesbian separatism’, accused straight feminist of “selling out to men” and argued that lesbian, having rejected “oppressive” heterosexual relationship, were the only true feminists.25

2. Homophobia in American Society

The basic analysis of this thesis is about homophobic society in America, perhaps the above explanation about American social condition and contemporary American family can give an entry to understand American society itself. The researcher assumes that Homophobia in America cannot be separated with its social condition. At last the researcher wants to give a brief description about homophobia itself.

An American Psychologist George Weiberg first coined the term Homophobia in the 1970s. Literally it means fear of homosexuality, but the term has come to refer to all hostility directed towards lesbian and gays—a shorthand for a whole range of persecution, discrimination and prejudice that seems to exist in most societies.26 In this case, According to Gregory M. Herek from the University of California, there are many different forms of homophobia;

25 Ibid, p. 359
a. Personal or Internalized Homophobia - stems from a personal belief that homosexuality is totally unacceptable. This belief can result in a low self-confidence and exhibit 'self-harming' behaviors, or even suicide among young lesbians and gay teen boys.

b. Interpersonal Homophobia - may manifest itself as name-calling, discrimination, or verbal and physical harassment, and has been used as a useful focus for school initiatives to reduce homophobia through education.

c. Institutional Homophobia - refers to ways in which government, corporations, businesses, churches and other organizations discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation.

d. Cultural Homophobia - is much more difficult to deal with, because its roots are hidden and refer to certain social standards and stereotypes which tend to portray only heterosexuality as the only acceptable orientation. Because of this, young gay and lesbian people can be adversely affected because they lack positive role models or information about homosexuality. Leaving them feeling isolated from their friends, families and community.²⁷

According to Dennis Altman, homophobia tends to take different form depending on whether it is directed against men or women. This is not surprising in societies, which value men above women. Many straight men

are titillated rather than socked by lesbianism; most pornography showing sex between women is actually aimed at straight men. This can ironically; men those lesbians have more space and are less likely to be prosecuted for their sexual behaviors. Lesbians do encounter homophobic violence, however Women identified as lesbians are sometimes very vulnerable to being raped.  

In the United States of America, homophobia becomes integral part of American culture as well as racism and sexism. The fear of AIDS has been an excuse for attacking homosexual and often extended to lesbians amongst whom there is very low incidents in AIDS. Homophobia is broadly directed against Gays, Lesbians, Bisexual and Transsexuals (GLBT).

Many GLBT communities, then, fight against homophobia. Many efforts to fight homophobia in amount is a little more than prohibitions against homophobic varieties of hate speech and ad hoc sanction against offenders. Recently, the fight also continues against the law that prohibited gay marriage. Many states have been trying to decide how to treat those same-sex couple. And a fight in legislation also has been done. They try to block anti-gay marriage bills:

Laws that say same-sex marriage are “null and void” or that marriage is a union between a man and a women.

Laws that say recognition of a same-sex marriage from another states is prohibited.

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28 Dennis Altman, Loc. Cit.
Laws that say recognition of any type of out-of-state marriage is allowed only if couple could have married in the state itself.\textsuperscript{29}


They also fight against Sodomy Laws; Sodomy Laws generally prohibit oral and anal sex, even between consenting adults. In 1961, Illinois became the first state to repeal Sodomy Laws, and in 1980, 21 states got rid of their Sodomy Laws. And in 2001, Minnesota became the last states to repeal its Sodomy Laws. \textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{C. Social Condition Background}

\textbf{1. American social, economic and cultural condition (1990-1999)}

During the time of 1990-1999, American society had grown up rapidly as a nation with dominant roles in the world. This decade has been marked by

\textsuperscript{29} The ACLU Report, 1998, 29 September 2002 (http://www.aclu.org/)
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
many roles of American international policy. After the collapse of Soviet Communism at the end of eighties, America became the only super power nation and country, which controlled world civilization. It can be seen from its roles in United Nation Organization and in many groups of alliances such as NATO (North Atlantic Territory Organization) and WTO (World Trade Organization). The clear example of American domination is its role in initiating the alliance to attack Iraq in Gulf War (1990-1991).

On the other hand, the development of its economic growth showed significant accounts. On the report released by American Embassy, it is noted that America can decrease unemployment number into 4.2% in 1999. With the population number was 281, 421, 906 people (2000 census), America can reach life expectancy 73.1 of male and 79.1 of female. Toward economic aspects, American reached their national dept on 5.413.1 US Dollars (1997), Average salary 13.37 US Dollars/ hr (1999), Teacher’s salary 39.3447 US Dollars (1998) and their minimum wage 5.15 US Dollars / hr (1997).

This decade (1990-1999) is a decade of the development of electronic Era, telecommunication and cyber technology. They become the main part of American socio-cultural development. People of America live in a country in which they can get the fastest information everyday through television, newspaper, and Internet. Service-sector, which becomes the dominant sector of jobs in economy, influenced the increasing use of computer. During this

31 Ibid.
time, America has been entering the information age. In short, America has become a cosmopolitan country and more than modern country.

Meanwhile, it is not the case that American glory is without paradox; America is a country of paradox. American society has many social problems as the effect of modernity such as urban and slum society, violence, based on race, crime, AIDS and also morality of the nation.

Historically, Urban and slum society has been shaped since the 19th century, after the collapse of southern economy post Civil War. Industrialization in the northern and the shaping of the city attract many people from the village to come to work in factories in the city. Until the end of 1990 most American people live in the city. The problem becomes more complex than before by the arrival of many immigrants from other countries. Once more, America became a heaven for people from around the world.

Slum society makes the problem of crime and violence came to the surface. For many Americans “the economic, social and political trends of this decade have caused crime and racial polarization in many urban centers.”

The problems that become the main concern of American people is the increasing of drugs abuse, homosexuality and AIDS. These three kinds of problem related each other. Since the discovery of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in 1981, America gives very much concern to this problem. AIDS is transmitted sexually or through blood transfusion; in the

USA it struck homosexual men and intravenous drug users with particular virulence. In 1992, America was shocked that “more than 150,000 Americans had died of AIDS, with estimation of those carrying the AIDS virus ranging from 300,000 to more than one million”\textsuperscript{33}. Modernity has caused many morality problems. The city as the basis of modern culture is mainly where some problems of modern moral disease occur. For rural Americans, they conservatively viewed these problems. The liberal modern people in the city and the conservative-rural people in the village are American paradox. A large group of conservative people has criticized the modern chaotic society. The critics also come from the new left modern organization. Fundamentalist Christians, who regard the Bible as the direct and inerrant word of God, were particularly concerned about an increase in crime and sexual morality\textsuperscript{34}.

2. American Family: The Changing of Myth

Modern American family is different from the American family in the past. During the time 1990-1999, the condition of women has reached its better position. “Women hold up half the sky”\textsuperscript{35} In these years ideas about the equality of women with men, about the right to participate in society, to earn fair pay, to control with their own voice in political decision, are taken for granted by most women of United States. Women become more independent in their relationship with men.

\textsuperscript{33} Toward the 21st century, United States Information agency, May 1994, 9 March 2001 (www.nhmccd.edu/contracts/lrc/kc/decade 90.htm/# top,).
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Betty Friedan, “Beyond Gender”, News Week magazines, September, 4\textsuperscript{th} 1995.
Looking back to the history of America, after the end of World War II that is followed by the Baby Boom in the most of American family, the social trends of American society have changed. These trends include high rate of residential mobility, a waning of rural-form population, the merging of business and industrial enterprise, concentration of population in urban and sub-urban areas, the proliferation of the technological improvement in manufacturing, government and bureaucracy, communication media and so on. These onrush changes of social trends have significantly reduced economic, social differences between men and women. Increasingly the educational level of women is rising to that of men.

Meanwhile, in the high concentration of population areas, the development of technological industry has made the efficient operation of the work with a relatively small work force. So that large of population are unemployed because of the surplus of workers. In the connection to the American Family, this such social and economic condition has influenced the life of people especially young adults to view individual freedom, individualism, and their opinion about family life. They preferred living independently and postponed their marriage to earn money and economic preparation. The social movement stressing civil liberties cause the increasing rate of delayed marriage among young generation. Divorce and remarriage are also increasing, for example, “...in 1995 there were 1,95
Million marriages and 973 divorces. In the recent year there has been around one divorce for every two marriages in the United States.

People are getting married later and giving birth to children later, frequently waiting until they are 30 to have the first child. There is an increase in childlessness among married couples, and divorce and remarriage are becoming more and more prevalent. Sex outside of marriage is much less severely penalized than it was in previous generation.

How does the myth about American family in the past and in the present?. American family in the past was identical with the form of extended family that refers to a group of three or more generations formed as an outgrowth of the parent-child relationship. Grandparents, parents, and children together comprise an extended family. But the most common formation during the time of American history is the nuclear family that was composed of husband, wife and any children. Both extended and nuclear families were the typical American family in the past. In the present, the myth has been changing. The compositions of the families are mostly stepfamilies. They include children and grandchildren from the previous marriage, or unrelated children. The wives and the mothers are likely to work. The family is highly unstable. Broken home and verbal violence in the home is something common.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher wants to give some analysis related to some fundamental questions being mentioned in the first chapter, therefore, this chapter will be divided into three sub chapters in order to discuss each question more deeply. The first sub chapter will talk about how the film asserts lesbianism behaviours through the character Teena Brandon and Lana Tisdel. By using semiotic approach the researcher wants to dig up any information from the film as much as possible to support the description about Teena’s and Lana’s lesbian behaviours. The second will answer the question “how does the film reflect the characters’ responses toward Teena’s sexual identity and her lesbian relationship with Lana”. Similar to the first stage, it will use semiotic approach to find out any information (any sign, any symbol) in order to get clear description about the other character’s responses toward Teena’s sexual identity and her lesbian relationship with Lana. The third sub chapter will explain the homophobic society in America that is reflected in the film. Here, the researcher will use the sociological approach to trace back all description in the first and second sub chapter to its social context.

Considering the above explanation, the use of semiotic approach is very important, therefore this analysis will start with simple analysis of the Title. The title of the film Boys Don’t Cry contains both functional meaning as a title and ideological meaning that represents norms, values and symbols of particular society. By using any possible references it is possible to study and to trace back
all the sign of the title *Boys Don’t Cry* to find its ideological meaning or *myth* as being analysed by Barthes. *Boys Don’t Cry* at the first order semiotic system represents something natural that boys – do – not – cry- and only has a function as a ‘title’. But at the second order semiotic system, it consists of ideological and political meaning and seems to be historical. First, *Boys Don’t Cry* refers to the meaning that every man must not cry and refers to its opposite that woman does usually cry. It is because the society has constructed gender stereotypes based on sex differentiation about what should man/male do and have and what woman/female should do and have. Man is strong, powerful, and rational but woman is weak, powerless and emotional.

**Boys Don’t Cry**

I would say I'm sorry if I thought that it would change your mind  
but I know that this time I have said too much been too unkind  
I would break down your feet and beg forgiveness plead with you  
but I know that it's no use cuz now there's nothing I can do  
I try to laugh about it  
cover it all up with lies  
I try to laugh about it  
hiding the tears in my eyes  
cuz boys don't cry  
boys don't cry  
I would tell you that I love you if I thought that you would stay  
but I know that it's too late cuz you've already gone away
misjudged your limits
pushed you too far
I took you for granted
I thought that you needed me more, more, more, more
I would do most anything to get you back by my side
but I'll just keep on laughing
hiding the tears in my eyes
cuz boys don't cry
boys don't cry

(The Script, p. 29)

The use of the sentence “boys don’t cry” on that lyrics gives an understanding about a sex differentiation and gender stereotype that take action (operate) in the society. The song is to explain the situation in which Brandon telling the truth about her real sexual identity. (S)he realizes that she will lose Lana’s love, but she will not cry although she wants to cry. Because she wants to be a man, she must not cry. The stereotype operated among the society is that a man is a strong creature who will not cry cause a small problem. If Brandon wants to be recognized and to be accepted as a man in the society, she must follow the rules that “Boys don’t cry”

A. Lesbian Behaviours That is Reflected in The Film

1. Teena Brandon’s Lesbian Behaviours

   From the film, the researcher is well informed about Teena Brandon’s lesbian behaviours through her sexual attitude, desire and attraction toward the same sex, which are clearly seen from her physical appearance. Since “…not all the people with homosexual attraction, develop a gay or lesbian identity…”41, it is not easy to identify the physical appearance of lesbian people. There are not any definite theories that lesbian behaviours will influence the physical appearance, except the hormonal theory. Hormonal study toward lesbianism covers “…masculinized female hermaphrodites, and those experiencing delayed, androgen in sensitivity, and precocious puberty”42. For example Teena Brandon’s case can be studied using hormonal point of view in order to understand the process of her homosexuality. Teena is a young woman undergoing hormone therapy in preparation for sex change operation. Brandon Teena, who was born female in 1972 as Teena Brandon, grew into adulthood in a Lincoln, Nebraska trailer park. There and in the small Nebraska town of Falls City, where he moved in late 1993, he reconstructed his identity as a man, using a variety of gender-neutral and masculine names. He dated a succession of women, and early in December fell in love with Lana Tisdell in Falls City.

   All the above can be seen from the event in the film as follows,

(In Jail when Lana was coming to look in on Brandon, Lana was wondering that Brandon was in Girl’s Cell. Brandon had to confess about his sexual identity.)

-(Brandon) I’m Hermaphrodite.

-(Lana) A what?

-(Brandon) Come here (clear throat)

It’s a person who has both … girl and boy parts.

Brandon real name is Teena Brandon.

(The Script, 1999:28)

The word ‘Hermaphrodite’ is usually used to identify the animal or plant sexes; means having both male and female reproductive organs. It derives from Hermaphroditus, “the mythical story that Hermaphroditus, son of Hermes and Aphrodite, when bathing, became joined in one body with Salmacis, the nymph of a fountain in Caria.”43. In the film, Brandon explains to Lana that he is a hermaphrodite person and the phrase “person who has both … girl and boys part” is aimed to explain that he has double sexual organ (vagina and penis).

The film actually does not give clear information about Brandon’s hermaphrodite identity. When Brandon tells Lana that she is Hermaphrodite with both girl and boy’s part, it seems that Brandon is completely a hermaphrodite with double sexual organ. Meanwhile, the researcher gets some contradiction in the film concerning to that. The researcher finds that Brandon is often described as a girl (with single organ “vagina”).44. First,

43 Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary. © 1996
Lonny (Brandon’s friend in Lincoln) always calls Brandon as a girl who only will be a man by doing hormone therapy process.

(Lonny) That shit’s insane! You gotta see shrinks, shoot hormones up your butt.

(Brandon) It cost a fuckin’ fortune. I’m gonna be an old man by the time I get that of money.

(The Script: p. 5)

Second, after John and Tom undressed Brandon in Lana’s house, she reported to the police and she admitted herself as a girl, although the sheriff did not believe.

(sheriff) I can’t believe that he pulled your pants down, and if you are a female, that he didn’t stick his hand or finger in you.

(The Script: p. 35)

Third, in every camera angle exposing Brandon sexual organ _when Brandon put a sock under her pant, when Brandon make a love to Lana, and when John and Tom undressed her in Lana’s room_ it does not show clearly that Brandon has double sexual organ, there only her vagina is exposed.

Considering the above contradiction, the researcher assumes that there are two possibilities about Teena’s hermaphrodite identity in the film. First, Teena is completely a hermaphrodite person with double sexual organ, but the film could not show detail description (it could be due to the ethics or codes of movie production45). Second, Teena is not completely a

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hermaphrodite person; the word “hermaphrodite” is to describe that she has double sexual identity and not double sexual organ.

In order to avoid any deviation in the analysis, the researcher prefers the second assumption than the first one, for; the film gives more proof about it\textsuperscript{46}. This assumption gives a basic understanding to analyse Teena’s lesbian behaviours in the film.

Teena Brandon is a female with external genitalia “vagina”, but internally she is ambiguous between male and female identity. She was born with normal external organ, but her identity is still questionable, for, she acts like a man although she is externally female. Hormonally, she also tends to have an ambiguous sexual identity; \textit{transsexual}; a male sees himself as a female (male transsexual) or a female sees herself as a male (Female Transsexual)\textsuperscript{47}. Teena Brandon is a female transsexual refers to her desire to male organ (penis) to replace her vagina and labia. She sees herself as a male and then acts like a real man in the society.

In American society, Teena can also be called as \textit{Transvestism or Cross-dresser}:

\begin{quote}
\ldots People who enjoy dressing in the clothing of the opposite sex are broadly termed Transvestites or cross-dressers (TVs and CDs). The
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} See, Cynthia Fuchs, \textit{Boys Don’t Cry: Film Review}, 1999, 9 March 2000 (http://popmatters.com/film/Boys-don’t-cry.html). \text{...Bandon embodies the ongoing dilemma of masculine identity. This dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that, (….) you already know that 18-years-old Brandon’s efforts to act like a boy are complicated by the fact that he is, biologically speaking, a girl, born Teena Brandon. See also, Mary Ann Johanson, \textit{Gender Bender: Boys Don’t Cry and the Brandon Teena Story}, 1999, 2 March 2003 (www. Movies. Yahoo. Com) The true-life tragedy of the person who called himself Brandon Teena -- and was actually a young woman named Teena Brandon --(….)

\textsuperscript{47} Encyclopaedia of psychology, \textit{Op. Cit.} p.199
large majority of transvestites are male and heterosexual. If they are homosexual they are usually called drag queens. The motivation behind such cross-dressing behaviour is varied. For some there is erotic satisfaction, for others cross-dressing is an expression of a personality component comfortable in the clothes of the opposite sex. The majority of homosexual do not enjoy cross-dressing. Transsexual cross-dress, because it is in keeping with movement toward living in the sex they feel is them. Individuals that are primarily transvestites often express feeling of temporarily exchanging gender when cross-dressed.48

Picture: Brandon and her male (man) physical appearances.49

Cross-dresser and transsexual are similar, both have same characteristic in expressing their behaviour. It can be said that Cross-dresser is the overt behaviour of transsexual peoples. Cross-dresser behaviour of Teena can be seen from her desire to be a man; Teena cuts he hair short and dresses like a man in order to be accepted by society as a man.

(After knowing that Brandon was picked up by the police, John and Tom went to Lana’s mom and told her about the real name of Brandon on

48 Ibid.
49 Boys Don’t Cry: Production Photos. 1999, 3 March 2003 (http://movies.yahoo.com)
the newspaper. John and Tom then checked Lana’s room and all the stuff including Brandon’s stuff.)

-(John) Tom, check this out.

Cross-dresser and Transsexuals;

The Uninvited Dilemma”Sexual Identity crisis. Jesus.

(The Script; p. 30)

The dialogue above gives a clear explanation about the cross-dresser and transsexual identity of Teena Brandon, in that term, what so called by The Uninvited Dilemma. It means that Brandon has a dilemma about her (his) sexual identity. She has female sexual organ (genital) in one side, but hormonally, she has ambiguous sexual identity in other side. She feels living as a man; she wants to change her sexual organ because she wants to live in the sex she feels is her.

-(John) Fuckin’ Christ, Tom! Check this out. Look at this.

The grafted skin will mimic the loose skin of the natural male penis.

(The Script, p.30)

In other part of the script of the film, Brandon also confessed about his sexual identity.

(After being raped by Tom Nissen and John Lotter, Brandon reported to the police, and she was interrogated then.)

(Sheriff) Why do you run around with guys, bein’ you’re a girl yourself?

Why do you go around kissin’ every girl?

I don’t know what this has to do with what happened.
Sexual identity crisis refers to Brandon’s dilemma related to her sexual identity. She finds herself trapped in female body with female sexual organ, for hormonally she has ambiguous identity between male and female. Her identity as Cross-dresser and Transsexual give a consequence to be called as a people with sexual identity crisis.

From the explanation above, it the researcher knows that Teena Brandon sexual identity are focused in two major identities. The first is “Hermaphrodite” that represents Teena as a person on both male and female sexual identity. It refers to the hormonal aspects. The second are Cross-dresser and Transsexual that refer to all Teena’s Behaviours in which she becomes comfortable in male identity. It refers to overt manifestation and social behaviours in the society.

The researcher makes an assumption that hermaphrodite, Cross-dresser and transsexual are the main identity by which Teena is trapped in an Uninvited dilemma and sexual identity crisis. She is in ambiguous position between male and female identity. In the society, she manifests her
identity into her behaviors including her lesbian behaviors. She wants to be a man, so she cuts her hair short, puts a sock down her pants, and goes forth into the world as a man namely Brandon Teena. She dates many girls including Lana with whom she finally makes love and has homosexual relationship.

Those identifications about Teena Brandon have brought to the conclusion about sexual identity that is finally said by “crisis”. The word “crisis” is being understood as something out of normalcy. Homosexuality, including gay and lesbian, among the society is out of normalcy. Hermaphrodite, Cross-dresser and transsexual bring about homosexual manners toward Teena’s behaviours hormonally; so then Teena is identified as out of normalcy.

2. Lana Tisdel’s Lesbian Behaviours

Lana Tisdel is a young woman from Falls City, Nebraska. In this film, Lana is being described as a frustrated young woman, and bored with her own life. At the first appearance of Lana’s character in Boys Don’t Cry, the camera angle draws Lana singing karaoke with a sad face. With an empty look, she looks pale and gloomy. It seems that the director wants to draw Lana as a completely young frustrated girl. It seems to be more complete, while the song “The Bluest Eyes in Texas”\footnote{Nathan Larson and Nina Persson, The Bluest Eyes of Texas: Boys Don’t Cry Soundtrack, 1999, 25, January 2003 (www.stlyric.com)} is following the situation. It is appropriate to draw Lana in very blue and sad atmosphere: “The bluest eyes
in Texas are haunting me tonight… left me alone praying for the dawn”. At night, she went from one bar to another as a karaoke singer. Her mother is always drunk when she was home. She does not like her life. She does not even trust anybody.

-(Lana) I don’t need anybody to walk me anywhere
-(Brandon) jeez, watch it.
-(Lana) I don’t need you to stop me from trippin’.

(the Script, p. 10)

When she met Brandon, she realized that (s)he differs to any other man in the Falls City, (s)he takes much attention to Lana and it impressed Lana as a woman who needs to be taken care of. She even compares her(im) to John who often treated her badly.

Picture 2: Lana shares all her problem with Brandon. Brandon impressed her much for all his kindness and attention.51

51 Boys Don’t Cry, op. cit.
Lana is much impressed by Brandon’s kindness and attention to her. Even Lana falls in love with Brandon that brings her into homosexual relationship. The process of Lana-Brandon’s homosexual relationship in the film is to be analysed in order to get a clear understanding about Lana’s Lesbian behaviours. In Brandon’s case, hormonal aspects are the fundamental aspect of being lesbian. For Lana, there is not any indication in the film that Lana is hormonally being lesbian. She was born as a normal woman both genital and hormonal.

Below are some events in which Lana is involved with Brandon. These are aimed to give a description about Lana’s behaviours especially in her lesbian relationship with Brandon.

(Brandon knows that Lana also likes him. After getting back from his problem in Lincoln, for his crime of spray painting and smashing 50 new cars. He comes to Falls City to ask Lana for dating. In sort, in their first date Lana and Brandon are involved in very intense love romance.)

-(Brandon)(Whispering) You’re so pretty
I feel like I’m in trance
Am I goin’ too fast?
(Gasping)
(Panting)
(Moaning)
(Coughing)

(The Script; p. 22)
The above dialogue is about Lana making love with Brandon while she did not know that Brandon was actually a girl. She slept with Brandon by an understanding that Brandon is a kind man and he loves her very much.

(One day after Lana had slept with Brandon, Candace, her friend, asked her about her date with Brandon.)

-(Lana) I cannot talk about it. It’s too intense.

-(Candace) Come on, Lana.

I can’t take it.

(Lana imagines the event when they were making love, here Lana saw Brandon’s breast that’s covered by a very tight white fabric)

(Panting)

-(Moans)

(Brandon’s voice) Are you okay?

(Lana’s voice) Yeah.

-(Brandon) Are you okay? –(Lana) Yeah.

-(Brandon) What? –(Lana) I mean—

I don’t know

You’re so handsome.

(The Script; p. 23)

Lana tries to cover the real story up, by saying “I don’t know, it’s too intense”. She does not want Candace to know her seeing Brandon’s breast. Lana knows that Brandon is actually a girl but she does not want anyone else to know about it. She feels something different about Brandon, just like when she told John about Brandon.
-(John) What do you see in him?
-(Lana) I mean, I know he’s nice and everything, but he’s kind of wuss. I know he’s no big the man like you. There’s just something about him.

(The script; p. 25)

From time to time, Brandon impresses Lana much. Brandon can take care of her and entertains her while she is sad. Brandon cheers her up when she was fired from her job; even she told Brandon that she really wants to go with him to Memphis leaving Falls City. When Brandon tells her that he wants to marry her, she does not refuse. Here, Brandon has not told her about his real sexual identity and Lana herself was not quite sure of it.

When She came to jail to visit Brandon, She wondered why Brandon was in girl cell. Finally Brandon has to confess about his real sexual identity. But Lana did not care anymore about that, she knew that she has been falling in love with Brandon. The following quotation portrays the situation:

-(Brandon) See Brandon’s not quite a he . Brandon’s more like a she
-(Lana) Shut up. That’s not your business.

I don’t care it you’re half monkey or half ape. I’m getting’ you out of here.

(The Script; p. 28)
It is possible to say, considering the above quotation, Lana realizes about Brandon’s real identity. She proclaims that she did not care with Brandon identity. It means that Lana starts to have a lesbian relationship with Brandon.

(Panting)

Goddamn it.

-(Lana)I want to touch you the way you touch me.

-(Brandon)No wait.

-(Lana)Fuck you, Brandon.

Fuck you.

I want to feel what I feel.

-(Brandon)Lana, wait. Wait.

(The Script; p. 29)

The above quotation explains the situation when Lana was making love to Brandon consciously. Lana wants to be touched just like the way she wants to be touched. She wants to feel what she feels. Just like, she feels she falls in love with Brandon the way she is. No matter what she was, Hermaphrodite, or having sexual identity crisis. She is right now completely involved in homosexual relationship.
When John and Tom finally can expose Brandon’s real sexual identity, that he is actually a girl, Lana still stands for Brandon after all violence happened to him(her). After Brandon (Teena) was raped by John and Tom, Lana must take care of her. Lana realizes she loves a pretty girl not a handsome man called “Brandon”. Brandon is just a girl like her, she is a weak and becomes a victim of men. The situation is described in the following quotation:

-(Lana) Oh God.
You are so pretty
-(Brandon) You are just saying that ‘cause you like me
-(Lana)No
What were you like…
Before all this

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Were you like me, like a girl-girl
-(Brandon) Yeah.
Like a long time ago.
Then I guess I was just like a boy-girl
Then I was a jerk
It’s weird
Finally everything felt right.

(The Script; p. 39).

From the description above, the researcher composes the short chronology of Lana’s Lesbian behaviours process:

1. Lana meets Brandon.
2. Lana feels that Brandon pays much attention to her.
3. Lana feels sympathetic toward Brandon’s attention.
4. Lana falls in love with Brandon and gets involved.
5. Lana has not known that Brandon is actually a girl.
6. Lana knows that Brandon is a girl.
7. Lana does not take any matter to the real Brandon.
8. Lana gets involved with Brandon in Homosexual relationship consciously.

The process above describes Lana’s lesbian behaviours that are influenced by her social experience. The social condition where Lana lives has formed her identity of being involved in lesbian relationship with Brandon.
Social condition refers to Falls City as a very small town, “that’s not even on the map”\textsuperscript{53}, with rural community, with many problems of the society have made Lana living there frustrated. She feels bored with her life. For her, all people just live for themselves, they do not care about any body else. Lana as a woman wants to have someone who takes care of her much with whom she can share all the problems.

A social condition, particularly Falls City, is very important to explain Lana’s lesbian behaviours. Social influences play many roles in the process of Lana’s lesbian identity. Moreover, Lana is genetically and hormonally normal woman. She does not have any tendency to have genetic bias and hormonal bias for her sexual identity. When she met Brandon, Social condition and her condition as being normal are melted into a complicated process of self-identification. The social condition has influenced her self-identification. Social condition also influences Lana’s point of view including her view about homosexual relationship. Her choice to have homosexual relationship with Brandon is the answer of her dissatisfaction with her social life. Lana’s Lesbian behaviours are the process of social influences toward human behaviours. As being stated by Diamond in \textit{Encyclopaedia of Psychology} that behaviour is the combination of genetic bias and social influences: \textit{Genetic bias + Social influences = Behaviours}.\textsuperscript{54}

The rules, codes and tradition or the environment itself influence and structure an Individual’s behaviours.

\textsuperscript{54} Raymond J. Corsini, \textit{Op. Cit.} p.401
From the description about the lesbian behaviours, it is interesting to analyse the relationship of Teena and Lana, for, it is constructed by two different processes. Teena in one side is a person with basically transsexual and lesbian and Lana who is naturally a normal woman and then socially lesbian. In this relationship, Teena makes an active approach to attract Lana. She uses a male identity a “Brandon”. She attracted Lana with his kindness and cares that cause her unaware about the real identity of Brandon. She falls in love with a man called Brandon. Whether the relationship is completely a homosexual (lesbian) relationship or not, it needs further discussion. In the following quotation and discussion, the researcher wants to describe Lana and Brandon’s lesbian relationship.

When Brandon started to attract Lana and she made a decision to ask Lana to marry her, (s)he actually realized himself as a woman but (s)he did not want to admit it.

-(Lonny) If you was a guy, I might even wanna fuck you.
 -(Brandon) you mean, if you was a guy you might even wanna fuck me.

-(Lonny) So, you are a boy? Now what?
 -(Brandon) Come on
 -(Lonny) No fuckin’ way
 -(Brandon) Yes fuckin’ way.

(The Script: p. 1)
This sort of conversation is between Lonny (friend of Brandon) and Brandon. Lonny tries to convince Brandon that (s)he is not a boy, and Brandon does not want to admit that. (S)he believes that by his(her) pretending as if (s)he were a real boy, every girl will fall in love with her. Brandon also believes that (s)he can attract Lana and even wants to marry her somehow. (S)he will not fail in getting a close relationship with Lana.

-(Brandon) Look. See, isn’t she beautiful?
-(Lonny) If you like a white trash.
-(Brandon) I’m gonna ask her to marry me.
-(Lonny) Before or after your sex change operation?
Before or after you tell her that you’re a girl
-(Brandon) Shut up! It’s different. It’s working
No, I’m not gonna fuck it up this time.

(The script; p. 22)

The above quotation describes that Brandon tries to convince Lonny that her relationship with Lana would not fail. She says “It’s working” and “I’m not gonna fuck it up this time”. Brandon knows and believes that Lana needs someone with whom she can share all her problems and take care of her anytime.

After Lana knew that the real Brandon is a girl, the relationship is still continuing. Here, both Brandon and Lana have been involved in overt female-female relationship. Lana does not care whether Brandon is a man or
a girl. She loves her in the way that Lana wants to love someone to be her lover and someone she could share with. The most important thing about this relationship is that they both want to continue the relationship in a marriage and having a happy family.

(Brandon's Voice) The thing about the trailerpark… is we’ll have picnic tables, people playing music and barbecues every night.

We’ll invite our friends: Candace, Kate, your mom. Heck, even John, if you don’t kill each other first. And best of all, we’ll have our own Airstream.

(The Script: p. 27)

This event is about when Brandon was remembering Lana talked to her about the family that they want to have. Lana used the word “we and our” to express the relationship. Lana and Teena want to have happy family just like other American families; having a picnic, having barbecues and some friends to be invited to their party.

From the description above, the researcher concludes that the relationship between Teena and Lana has two phases of relationship. By using the terminology that Lesbianism (relationship) is an overt (manifest) homosexual relationship between women, the relationship occurs before Lana knows Brandon’s real identity is not lesbian relationship. The second phase occurs after Lana knows Brandon’s real identity is an overt homosexual relationship: the lesbian relationship has been manifested.

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B. Responses Toward Brandon’s Lesbian Identity

Falls City as a sociological and cultural setting of the film plays important roles in describing the characters. Falls City here is a small town, which is depressed economically. Its population is only under 5,000 with all white population, located in rural and semi-rural part of the United States. Falls City is often described as “The Land of Pick-up Truck” where peoples of Falls City use pick-up truck as their major transportation. This is due to the geographical condition of Falls City as a part of Nebraska Great Plain: a vast plain that slopes gently downward from the edge of the Rocky Mountain to the Mississippi River. Falls City is a dusty town with stony area in particular part. Pick-up truck is the most suitable transport in Falls City.

Nebraska, for the most part, is populated by immigrants. They come to many rural towns in Nebraska to work in meatpacking industry. As urban workers with minimum salary in rural area, the life of seems to be isolated from the big city. Economically, they have to higher cost to get their needs from the city. Peoples of Falls City live under depression.

In everyday life, peoples of Falls City seem to do nothing but drinking all day and night and pull cruel stunt upon one another. At the first appearance when Brandon arrived at Falls City, the situation in one bar in the city became a clear description of the people living there. Just like they were frustrated people,

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56 Ibid, p. 41
they were drunk and then fought upon one another, there they could boast themselves about everything. They try to find a place to run away from the problems: going from one party to another and one bar to another bar searching for another life, since they are bored with their everyday life. So to speak, their life is coloured only by fighting in the bar, getting drunk and also boasting. When the people are gathering in the bar, fighting is something unavoidable. Getting drunk becomes the habit and boasting is a must for a people to be acknowledged and to be honoured. People are in desperation and loneliness. There is something that haunts their life. They have dreams and hopes but those do not give anything.

Some quotations below portray the life of people in Falls City as being explained above:

-(John) So? He didn’t throw wildpunches without defense.

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59 Peter Sarsgaard as John, Hilary Swank as Brandon Teena and Brendan Sexton III as Tom in Fox Searchlight's Boys Don't Cry – 1999. 2 March 2003 (http://movies.yahoo.com).
You’re gonna get into fights over girls like Candace, you’ve gotta learn a few things.

(The Script; p. 5)

-(Tom) Sorry, it’s up here somewhere. We’re goin’ to a party. Wanna come. Candace?

-(Candace) It’s 70 miles away

-(John) I don’t care. The night is young and I am a mess, so..

(The Script; p. 5)

-(John) Ah, hey champ! You headin’ home tonight?

Tom only dates girls that got a little butt and a long crack.

You know what I mean? That’s how he picks’em.

(The Script; p. 6)

-(John) Oh, yeah. Tom’s big hero. He rescued everybody. Right, Dickward?

Yeah, so when they brought me in, they were like.

This is the biggest fire we seen here in 50 years. You’re a hero, man.

(The Script; p. 8)

The ‘Theme Song” and the Original Soundtrack also give a description about the social life as the cultural setting in the film.

(Male Singer Over Jukebox) Why are you hangin’ ‘round my door

Never felt so lonely before

Faded on my heart

(The Script, p. 3)
(sigh) Now I know what it ‘s like to cry

What it’s like to want to die

( The script, p. 3)

This song is played at the first appearance of Brandon in Falls City, Nebraska, in a bar when Brandon finally met Candace, John and also Tom and Lana. The title is A New Shade Of Blue, which is sung by The Bobby Fuller Four. The song gives strong atmosphere to explain the condition of the people in that bar. It describes a condition where many people were trapped in desperation. They feel lonely even they are in the crowded. The song represents the life of the people in Falls City as a rural country. They are economically depressed and they become frustrated. They spend most of their time in the bar and get drunk to run away from any problem in their life.

Another song to follow A New Shade Of Blue is The Bluest Eyes in Texas, written by Nathan Larson and Nina Persson who also become the singer. In the film the song appeared as the karaoke voice of Lana when Lana is singing in front of Brandon in the bar. This song also represents a situation of life; loneliness, desperation, and weakness. The sentence of the lyric “Left me lonely”, “Searching for the strength to carry on”, and “Are Haunting me tonight” give a clear representation to describe the life of the people in that bar. The people come from a town to another town, from a hotel room to another hotel room and from a bar to another bar. They are haunted by their own desperation; they search the strength to carry on.

I close my eyes for a moment
I’m still there
The bluest eyes in Texas
Are haunting me tonight
Another town
Another hotel room
Another dream that ended too soon
Left me lonely
Praying for the dawn
Searching for the strength to carry on
The bluest eyes in Texas
Are haunting me tonight.61

(The Script; p. 7)

Some other songs to accompany the situation in the film also seem to represent the life of people of Falls City. Below are some soundtrack lyrics to follow those two songs above in the film that can be a reflection of the situation in Falls City, Nebraska:

(Male Singer) L.A. is crazy
I got shake in my head
I feel like I’m dying and I wish I was dead

If I live till tomorrow that ‘ll be along time
I’ll reel and I’ll fall but I’ll rise on Cod’ine
You’ll forget you’re a woman
You’ll forget about men
Try it just once and you’ll try it again
You’ll forget about life you’ll forget about time
And live all your days a slave to Cod’ine
It’s real Lord, It’s real
One more time And some of them fall
To rise on Cod’ine

(The script, p. 13)

(Male Singer) That rusty nail over our front door
Is where I hung our tears in the rain
I threw that horseshoe into the weeds
To see what luck can bring
‘Cause you’re in your bed and I’m in mine
On either side of town
On either side of town

(The Script, p. 21.)

Considering the above explanation about the social condition of Falls City
which is reflected in the film, the researcher wants to give a brief description
about the characters’ responses in the film toward Brandon’s identity and her
relationship with Lana in order to get clear understanding about the homophobia

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(www. Stlyric.com)
aspects in the film. Below are each character in the film and their responses to Brandon’s identity and her relationship with Lana:

1. **John Lotter and Thomas Nissen**

   Charismatic and gregarious, John is the guy everybody wants to hang out with at the bar or the pool hall. He is an ex-con, but everybody knows he is not a bad man. John is an isolated and disturbed young man who was unequipped to handle the whole life, who became finally angered when things were not as black-and-white as he wanted. He becomes the friend of Tom Nissen. Having no family of his own, John has grafted himself onto Lana's family. John is extremely possessive of Lana and her family. He is dating Lana's mother even though he is only a couple years older than Brandon, and his relationship with Lana herself is unclear.

   Thomas Nissen is a friend of John and they spent almost all of their days together. John and Tom had been in and out of the prison together all their lives. Tom, just like John and other people in Falls City, spent their times in a bar, getting drunk, getting fight and also boasting about themselves. But on one side, Tom seems to be inferior to John. John was taking control on their friendship. In the film, the Director, Kimberly Peirce, drew Tom characterization less often compared to John. In many events, John has taken control of the conversation; he dominated the conversation even he much boasted about himself and also about Tom as being portrayed in the following events:

   -(John) Tom likes'em coyote ugly. You know coyote ugly?
-I’m all over some booty

-(Tom) Thank you

-(John) Looks like you are riding home with Ted Bundy.

-(Tom) Shut up John! He looks fine, right?

-(John) Just likes family

-(Tom) Speaking off.

(The Script; p. 6)

(John) Tom is a big hero. He rescued everybody. Right Dickward?

(The Script; p. 8)

-(John) All right, Tom, You’re up.

-(Tom) Not me man. I’m drinking.

(The script; p. 8)

However, Tom in the film represented a person as well as John represented. Tom and John seemed to be described as the same characterization. Kimberly Peirce said that John and Tom “were trying to figure out how to act like a man” (The Production Notes, 1999)63. Both frustrated with their life and try to find their self-identity.

John has not been sympathetic to Brandon since he knew that Brandon had a feeling for Lana. When John knew that Brandon have asked Lana to have a date, in the next morning, he interrogated her;

-(John) Nice (Grunts)

-(Lana) Nice.

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-(John) Don’t be upset I just wanna talk. –(Lana) About what?
-(John) about you and Brandon. I’m just looking out for you.
-(Lana) what are you talking about? He’s your friend too.

(The Script; p. 25)

The event above shows us that John becomes jealous to Brandon. Although John has already made a relationship with Lana’s mom, he also paid much attention to Lana and became very possessive.

-(John) You know I just want to protect you
-(Lana) I know

No one’s ever protect me like you.
-(John) what do you see in him ?

(The Script; p. 25)

Concerning John’s and Tom’s responses to Teena’s sexual identity and Lesbian relationship between Teena and Lana, it will be understandable that the researcher wants to discuss John and Tom together. They have been together since they were children, and they had done all activity together and also they had been in and out the prison together.

John and Tom treateed Teena badly after knowing her true sexual identity. Peirce gave her explanation about the violence; “the irony was that Tom and John feared losing their masculinity as much as Brandon feared losing his. When it turned out that Brandon _who was the antithesis of them_ turned out to be a better guy doing it as a girl, it threatened their masculinity, therefore wrecking their sense of themselves. When the fantasy
of Brandon evaporated, they turned, they turned on him as brutally as they had once idealized him”(The Production Notes; 1999)64

Generally the responses of Tom and John can clearly be seen, particularly when they finally knew that Brandon is actually a boy. They felt being cheated by Brandon, and they became very angry,

-(John) Holly fuckin’ mother of fuck!

Tom check this out

Crossed-dresser and Transexual;

The Uninvited Dilemma.

Sexual identity crisis, Jesus

Fuckin’ Christ, Tom! Check this out, Look at this.

The grafted skin will mimic the loose of the neutral male penis

(Tom) get this sick shit away from me.!

(The Script; p.30)

John and Tom became very angry after knowing Teena Brandon’s real identity, they came to Lana’s house to look for Teena there. When Lana and Teena got home, John and Tom who have been waiting for them interrogated them. John and Tom want to undress Brandon to get the proof of Brandon’s sexual identity. They force Brandon to tell them the truth.

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64 Ibid.

The following day, Brandon reported to the police that John and Tom raped her. They have forced her to come with them in a car and bring her out of the town. They interrogated her for all she has done with Lana. John and Tom were very angry and then they raped Teena. After that John and Tom also forced Brandon to keep the secret and not to tell the police about the rape. They even threatened to kill her if she told the police about what happened.

-(Brandon) Now, just-----take me home , okey?
-(John) If you keep the secret, we’ll say friends. All right, little buddy?. Cause if you don’t, we’ll have to silence you permanently.
-(Brandon) Yeah. Yeah, of course.

(The Script; p. 36)

2. **Candace**

Candace is Lana’s friend whom Brandon met for the first time in a bar in Falls City that finally Brandon got a fight with some guys in the bar

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65 Boys Don’t Cry: Reviews and Photos, 1999, 3 March 2003 (http://course/winona.msus.edu/pjohnson/h140/boys.htm)
for protecting Candace. Candace is a single mother with one little baby. Brandon after that was living in Candace’s house. In the film, Candace character replaced the real character of Lisa Lambert who was finally killed by John and Tom at the same day of Brandon’s murderer.

In Boys Don’t Cry Candace plays a role as a best friend of Lana’s and also of John’s and Tom’s. Her response toward Brandon’s sexual identity is quite strange and complicated. Sometimes she acts like she does not agree with Brandon and also her relationship with Lana, but in another time she tries to protect Brandon against the violent response of the people. The ambiguous position of Candace’s response can be understood for she feels that Brandon is a good guy and very kind to her child. But she also feels that Brandon’s sexual identity is something unacceptable among the society.

She is also a sensitive person with touchable feeling. It can be seen from how she has to give an opinion toward the relationship between Lana and Brandon. She wants to react like the other people to blame Brandon for her sexual identity, but she did not do it because she knows that Brandon is a good guy and Lana is her best friend. She believes that Lana knew what she has done with Brandon.

The solidarity feeling with her friend is one side of Candace characterization. It can be seen when she accompanied Lana to the jail to see

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67 Davina Anne Gabriel, Brandon Teena Murderer Sentenced, (Nebraska: Falls City, February 21st 1996). Jonh Lotter, convicted of 3 counts of 1 st degree murder for the death of Brandon Teena, Lisa Lambert, and Philip DeVine was sentenced to death this morning in Falls City, NE’s county courthouse. Lotter’s accomplice, Marvin Thomas Nissen, cut a deal for life imprints Lotter. The Victims’ families feel that the sentence is appropriate.
Brandon. After knowing Brandon’s real identity, she still gives Lana supports. Candace also protects Brandon from John and Tom after Brandon reported them to the police. John and Tom finally killed Candace in her house together with Brandon and her little baby.

3. **Lana’s Mom**

   Lana’s mom is a woman who is mentally depressed, for she is a single parent who lives in small town that is economically depressed. She gets drunken everyday and then falls asleep after that. She dates John although she knew that John was her daughter’s boyfriend. Even she lives with John in same house as Lana.

   Lana’s mom gives the same response to the lesbian (homosexual) relationship between Lana and Brandon. She becomes very angry with Brandon and denounces Brandon very much. She agrees with John and Tom to interrogate Brandon about her identity and also gives a permission to undress Brandon in the room in order to get a proof of her sexual identity. She cannot accept that her daughter, Lana, gets involved in a homosexual relationship with her.

   -(Mom) Son of a bitch, what have you done to my baby?

   What the fuck are you, you are motherfucker? Huh?

   Tell me!

   (The script; p. 33)

   There is one thing to be considered here, that Lana’s mom does not permit John and Tom to kill Brandon. Even she blames John and Tom for
they have raped Brandon. When they try to kill Brandon for reporting them to the police, Lana’s mom tried to protect Brandon. When they come to the house to look for Brandon and kill her, Lana’s mom did not tell them where Brandon was.

-(John) Where are they? They here?
Just wait okay?
I’ll be right back.

-(Lana’s mom) Brandon ain’t here
-(John) Where is she?
-(Lana’s mom) I don’t know, but he ain’t here.

(The Script; p. 41)

C. Homophobic Society That is Reflected in The Film

In the previous discussion, it can be seen clearly many responses from the characters in the film toward Brandon’s sexual identity and her homosexual (lesbian) with Lana. The responses tend to treat Brandon as an abnormal person; even the people believe that Brandon’s sexual identity is pathological. Brandon’s sexual identity as being called ‘transsexual’, ‘hermaphrodite’ and ‘cross-dresser’ are being labelled “sexual identity crisis”. Generally, the characters also respond the lesbian relationship between Brandon and Lana negatively and even violently. John, Tom, and Lana ‘s Mom give their response quite similar; they do not agree with the relationship and then treated Brandon violently, except Candace who seems to be more tolerable and shows her solidarity both to Brandon and Lana.
But, in the connection with the social view and homophobia, each character has different sides in determining their responses to the homosexuality. In this subchapter, the researcher want to analyse the social view of American society about homosexuality as being reflected in the film by which the researcher can bring it to understand the homophobia in American society. Homophobia, here, means all responses, treatments and even discrimination toward people with non-heterosexual identity (red. Homosexual).

Boys Don’t Cry describes and represents some homophobic aspects in society. The description about the Falls City’s society in Nebraska in the film seems to represent the real condition of American rural society and their view about homosexuality. American society is heterosexist society in which discrimination toward people with homosexual orientation is quite common. Heterosexism divides the society into some groups of sexual orientation and heterosexual as the primary and the only value to be accepted. Homosexual, transsexual and bisexual are to be viewed abnormal and pathological. Heterosexism has conditioned people to expect everyone to live and behave as heterosexual; they should be heterosexual. Heterosexism is much like sexism, and is rooted deep in the customs and traditions of a culture or society.

Falls City as the setting of the film clearly can be seen as a country that is unfamiliar toward people with sexual identity problem. The life of small town with high crime and economically depressed, represent a life of conservative society. As being described by Stephen Holden:
Falls City, an economically depressed small town with an all-white population of just under 5,000, epitomizes that sprawling rural and semi-rural section of the United States that might be described as the Land of the Pickup Truck. Those who live and work here may have heard of gay liberation, but they’ve never met an uncloseted gay or transgendered person and have no desire to do so. Although Falls City prides itself on being close-knit, God-fearing community, we learn that it has a high rate of domestic violence.68

In the film Boys Don’t Cry, the homophobic description can be seen from the attitude of the characters that also represent their social background. Homophobia, as being explained in the literary review, is divided into four kinds of homophobia; those are personal or internalised homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, institutional homophobia and cultural homophobia. Personal homophobia can be seen from the character of Brandon. It refers to Brandon’s personal belief that homosexuality is unacceptable. Although Brandon tries to erase that opinion, Brandon himself feels anxious and fearful about her sexual identity. She feels anxious of being refused by Lana, of the people who know her sexual identity, and also of being threatened and discriminated. Because of her fear and anxiety, Brandon left Lincoln for Falls City, Nebraska. She tries to find a place where people do not recognize and know her. In Lincoln, Brandon is usually called “Dyke”, “freak” and “scumbag”. (See the Script; p.2) Her anxiety and fear

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indicate her personal homophobia, deep in her heart, she believes that homosexuality is abnormal and unacceptable among the society.

In the first part of the film; Brandon speaks to Lonny when she prepares her haircut to pretend as a man.

-(Brandon) Look like a deformity
-(Lonny) I’ll fix that
-(Brandon) Oh, god. Yeah, that’s better.

(The Script; p. 1)

When Brandon said, “Look like a deformity”, she realized that she believed himself abnormal_ deformity. She found himself unable to be said normal. To cover up her deformity she pretended to be a man, cut her hair shorter, wore a sock or dildo under her pants, prepared her sex-change operation and hormone therapy in order to be normal.

Her fear and anxiety are also can be seen from the event when she tried to cover up her real sexual identity when Lana look in on Brandon in girl’s cell.

-(Lana) What are you doing here? The girl’s cell?
-(Brandon) Oh, the place is crazy. It’s like, put you wherever they want. It’s fine with me, I guess, but… Julie, give us a break. Watch the rest of the show. Tell us how it ends.

(The Script; p. 28)

By covering up her identity from Lana, Brandon has shown himself to believe that homosexuality is unacceptable. Brandon also has confessed about her mistakes; that what she has done is a mistake. As she said in her letter to Lonny:
-(Brandon’s voice) Dear Lonny, bet you can’t guess where I am. That’s right. Back in Jail … in Falls City. I’m so tired of fuckin’ up. I’m trying to stay strong but I don’t know if I can face all the mistake I’ve made. I’m trying staying tough.

(The Script; p. 27)

The feeling of fear and anxiety is the part of personal homophobia, which cause Brandon to believe the social view about homosexuality. She could not deny that view; Homosexuality is out of normalcy and seems to be pathology among the society.

**Boys Don’t Cry** also represents the side of homophobia being drawn from the characters giving responses toward Brandon’s homosexuality. It is a kind of *interpersonal homophobia* that refers to many kinds of nickname, discrimination, or verbal and physical harassment as form of reaction toward people with homosexual orientation. The conflict between Brandon and the other characters _John, Tom, Candace and Lana’s Mom_ is the most frequent description in the film to draw about homophobic atmosphere in the American Society. They treat Brandon badly, humiliate her and also discriminate and call her with names such as “dyke, freak, and fucker”. John, Tom, Candace and Lana’s mom view Brandon’s homosexual relationship with Lana as a mistake, something unacceptable.

-(Man) You’re not goin’ anywhere! Fucker!

Get back here, you fucker! Scumbag!

You fuckin’ dyke! You freak.
The words such as “freak, dyke, lesbo” are usually said by the people in Lincoln for Brandon. Such names generally are addressed to a person with abnormal sexual orientation _transsexual, hermaphrodite, bisexual, lesbian, and gay. The use of such kind of words in this film gives a clear description that there is discrimination in treatment to people out of heterosexual.

The film also tries to represent the side of homophobic society being drawn from its social institution. Institutional Homophobia refers to ways in which government, corporations, business, churches and other organizations discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation. Boys Don’t Cry is trying to criticize the police institution, in where the discrimination toward Brandon also happened. When Brandon reported that John and Tom have raped her, the sheriff discriminated Brandon by interrogating her much about her sexual identity crisis not about the rape itself.

-(Sheriff) Didn’t that kind of get your attention somehow?
That he wouldn’t put his hand in your pants… and play with you little bit?

(The Script: p. 34)

-(Sheriff) I can’t believe that he pulled your pants down.
And if you are a female, that he didn’t stick his hand or finger in you.

(The Script: p. 35)

-(Sheriff) why do you run around with guys, bein’ you’re a girl yourself?
Why do you go around kissin’ every girl?
I don’t know what this has to do with what happened
Cause I’m trying to get some answers so I can know ....

exactly what’s goin’ on.

Now, are you gonna answer my question for me or not?

(The Script; p. 37-38)

The Film criticizes the police institution through the characterization of Sheriff as the representative of governmental institution who gives service to the citizen without seeing any differences in society including the sexual orientation.

In America, the governmental institutions that support the existence of homophobia in society become the main concern of many activists of GLBT organization. The fight for alteration of any governmental products, including laws, and institution that still allow discrimination based on sexual orientations and gender identity. Anti-gay(same-sex) marriage and sodomy laws, especially, in many states has already been altered due to the GLBT movement. In Nebraska, law still prohibits the same-sex marriages. However, the Nebraska attorney general has recognized the constitutional problems with this provision saying that "it is possible that the Nebraska Supreme Court could hold that this section requires Nebraska to recognize same-sex marriages contracted in Hawaii or other states if such marriages were legally valid in those states." (1996 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 25.)

The most important thing to underline here is that the film gives a criticism toward homophobia as a cultural phenomenon. Boys Don’t Cry

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represents the culture in the sense of cultural homophobia. Cultural homophobia wants to give clear description that there are value, norms and customs to be the standard of social view based on sexual orientation. This term of cultural phenomenon is identical with heterosexism or even sexism among the society, which create cultural stereotypes, cultural images and cultural guidelines based on heterosexual point of view. People with homosexual orientation are being described with negative images, given negative stereotypes and they are called abnormal and pathological.

Concerning with cultural phenomenon, GLBT organization promotes the importance of Hate Crimes Laws covering sexual orientation and gender identity in every state in America. A hate crime is an unlawful act motivated by bias. It is a violent act causing death or bodily injury "because of the actual or perceived race, colour, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability" of the victim. Current law does not include sexual orientation, gender or disability. The difference between hate crimes and other crimes is that the offender is motivated by the victim's personal characteristics. Homophobic society tends to create a hate crime, for the society and its cultural products discriminate homosexual people due to her(his) personal characteristics

Many kind of responses and reactions in the film Boys Don’t Cry present the complete description what so being called “Homophobic society”. Brandon seems to feel homophobic; John and Tom react violently, humiliating and discriminatively toward Brandon, as a manifested action of their homophobic

[71] HRC familyNet, op. cit.
feeling; Candace and Lana’s mom give their responses of homophobic feeling; and even Sheriff who discriminates Brandon in interrogating the case; all the cases show the complete scenario saying that homosexuality is culturally unacceptable. The people, the institution and the culture collide together in creating homophobic atmosphere in the society.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

After analyzing the film Boys Don’t Cry, the researcher wants to make general conclusion concerning the phenomena of lesbianism and American homophobic society. Meanwhile, it needs to be underlined that the researcher assumes all phenomena discussed in this thesis are the reflection of American experiences. Boys Don’t Cry is a film based on true story. It reflects the real social condition in America especially about lesbianism and how American people perceive lesbianism.

Concerning to lesbianism, Boys Don’t Cry draws lesbianism in America both as individual (psychological) and social (cultural) process. Psychologically, lesbianism is something that can happen to everybody. In America, sex differentiation is based on heterosexism (male-female). There are no other sexes (including its stereotypes) except male and female, man and woman, girl and boy. Boys Don’t Cry gives clear correction to such an opinion above. They give a clear description that there are other gender such as hermaphrodite, transsexual, guy, homosexual, and lesbian that cannot be treated as well as heterosexism. Brandon Teena’s character in Boys Don’t Cry is one example of a person with sexual problem. Individually, Brandon cannot escape from that condition because she is created on such condition. She is a boy trapped in female body.

As a social process, Boys Don’t Cry portrays lesbianism as one of American paradox. America is a modern capitalist country in which the competition to
survive in the social life is the common thing. The high rate of competition has created a big accumulation of capitals in big city. Meanwhile, in rural city or in urban area the accumulation does not happen as well as in the big city. Many people in rural area, then, live under poverty (economically depressed). The economic condition in many rural areas, consequently, influences social life of the people living there. They live under frustrated condition, desperation, and high rate of crime. In Boys Don’t Cry, Falls City is the example of American rural area, which is economically depressed. The people of Falls City are under frustration and desperation of their life.

In Boys Don’t Cry, such a condition influences the life of Lana Tisdel. Lana is frustrated with her life. She feels that life has been unfair to her. She tries to solve all her problems alone for she cannot believe in anyone. She finally gets the solution on Brandon; she gets involved in lesbian relationship with Brandon. Lana chooses lesbianism (her relationship with Brandon) as the answer to her social problem. It is the answer to American Paradox.

As socio-cultural process, Lesbianism is a choice that must be respected. The film promotes that every person, including Brandon, can express their opinion, attraction, desires, and affection freely without any bands toward their sexual identity. America is a free country, which protects the rights of all people without any bands based on races, religion, and sexual orientation. Socially, lesbian people can interact with other people in the society as good as other people can.

Meanwhile, after analyzing the responses of other characters in the film, the researcher found another paradox about American society: that is homophobia. As
being explained above, America is a free country that protects the human rights without any bands based on races, religion and sexual orientation. Boys Don’t Cry represents American society as a homophobic society, they still discriminate homosexual people and treat them unfairly even with violence. In America, Homophobia can be found in many forms: personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural homophobia.

The personal belief of each character in Boys Don’t Cry that homosexual is totally unacceptable is a kind of personal homophobia. Brandon’s fear about her identity is also a kind of personal homophobia, for, he still acknowledges that homosexual is unacceptable. John, Tom, Lana’s mom, Candace, the sheriff, Lonny and even Lana have the same belief about homosexuality. It is due to the strong myth among society about sexuality (heterosexism). Cultural belief and custom, has strengthened the ideology of heterosexism, homosexuality is completely out of normalcy and a kind of psychopathology. Here, the cultural homophobia has been formed. When homophobia has already infiltrated into a culture level, it will influence the social interaction to create interpersonal homophobia. It will also influence institutional apparatus to create institutional homophobia: the police institution, governmental institution, educational institution and health and medical institution.

As the final conclusion, the researcher wants to give closing opinion about the film. Boys Don’t Cry is a good film, which presents an alternative discourse in understanding American culture. It is a movie about lesbian. It is more than lesbian movie for it presents not only one side of lesbian lure and attraction but it also tries
to criticize the society. The director, Kimberly Peirce, tries to adapt the real story of Teena Brandon into good motion picture, dominated by dark/half-black lighting to impress a real condition of depressed situation in Falls City. Although the film does not completely match to the real story, it has already presented the real American life.

B. Recommendation

An analysis toward a film as a popular cultural study is a comprehensive study, which needs a holistic understanding toward any materials and references to support the study. The researcher realizes that there are many aspects in this analysis that need improvement. It is due to the lack of materials and references as a stock of knowledge to support the process of analysis. To avoid the same problem for the next researchers who have strong interest in analyzing film, the researcher wants to give some recommendation to the next researchers:

1. To pay much attention to the development of film theory, for it will grow depending on the recent and most actual issues.

2. To pay much attention to the detail of film production such as motion picture, lighting, make up, montage, music, and soundtrack and also the process of distribution.

3. To pay much attention to the issues around the movie production such as the life of Hollywood movie star, the development of production codes and ethics.
4. The last, the researchers need to support their study with comprehensive understanding about sociological aspect, philosophical aspect, culture, custom, ideology, and myth that operate among the society.

The last but not least, the researcher hopes that this thesis will give much contribution in enriching the discourse about film study especially in The English Department, Faculty of Letters and Fine Arts, Sebelas Maret University. The researcher realizes that any criticism from other researchers will be very helpful to improve this thesis. Finally the researcher gives much appreciation to all who have helped in the process of analysis.
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