CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In most countries, the issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are seldom discussed because of religious and moral reasons. For example, in Indonesia, LGBT people are forbidden to express themselves publicly (Tang). Muhammad Nasir, the Technology, Research and Higher Education Minister of Indonesia, argued that LGBT people should be banned from university campuses, and according to him, universities should be able to uphold moral values and LGBT people are corrupting the nation's moral values ("LGBT not welcome at university: Minister"). Even in the United States, LGBT people are not free from violent acts. In Orlando, Florida, the tragedy that spurred from hatred against LGBT people took some of their lives and injured many others (Rothaus). In some countries like Yemen, Iran and Sudan, being an LGBT is punishable by death (Bearak). Another current incident can be seen in Chechnya where LGBT people are treated even worse. The Head of Chechen Republic not only hunts and puts gays into a secret concentration camp (Reynolds) to be tortured

to death (Carroll), but he blatantly denies the issue by saying gays do not exist in Chechnya ("Update – the persecution of gay men in Chechnya has resumed"). after his action of torturing the Chechen gays is revealed by a survivor of that incident (Rainsford). He also keeps on hunting Chechen gays who have left the country to seek shelter (Shuster) and blatantly condones the killing of LGBT people (Osborne).

Negative treatment of LGBT people is just as bad as the act of racism, yet, unlike racism which many people consider wrong now, many people still consider LGBT people as "wrong" and deserve of the negative treatments that they receive. I chose conflict as the topic of my thesis hoping that I can make more people aware of the issues that LGBT people face due to the social conflicts they have to suffer, and expand their mind to be more acceptant toward them.

Due to the fact that LGBT issues are taboo to discuss, not many people truly know what they are. In this thesis, I focus on a transgender man and a gay; thus, it is necessary to provide some backgrounds about them. According to Sally Hines in *Transforming Gender*, transgender is a broad concept which incorporates practices and identities such as transvestism, transsexuality, genderqueer, intersex, female and male drag, cross-dressing and some butch/femme practices. Transgender people specifically refer to individuals who have undergone genital surgery or hormone treatment, also those who cross gender in less-permanent ways (Hines 1).

Transvestism, which Hines quoted from Harry Benjamin, the medical practitioner and campaigner for sexual reform, which says "the desire of a certain group of men to dress as women or of women to dress as men. It can be powerful and overwhelming, even to the point of wanting to belong to the other sex and

correct nature's anatomical 'error'. For such cases the term transsexual seems appropriate" (Hines 11). Transsexuality is a "subset of transgender" (Bevan 42) but "some transsexual people prefer not to be labelled as a transgender" (Valentine).

Genderqueer is a "general term for gender identities that are not exclusively feminine or masculine" (Usher). Intersex is a "general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't really fit the typical definitions of female or male" ("What Is Intersex?").

Drag is a type of entertainment show where people perform in dresses that often in exaggeratedly stylized ways. The term "drag" originated as British theater slang in the 19th century and was used to describe women's clothing worn by men. Drag performers are usually called "drag queen" and "drag king" in which they are usually identify as men and present themselves in exaggeratedly feminine ways, and vice versa, as part of the show ("Understanding Drag"). Cross-dressing is "the act of wearing items of clothing and other accoutrements commonly associated with the opposite sex within a particular society" ("Cross-Dress"). usually for self-discovery, comfort, or disguise.

Butch and femme are "terms used in the lesbian and gay subculture to ascribe or acknowledge a masculine (butch) or feminine (femme) identity with its associated traits, behaviors, styles, self-perception, and so on" (Hollibaugh 249). In transgender community, a person that has the same gender identity as their assigned gender at birth gender is called cisgender.

Lesbian/gay is a common term that applies to a female/male that has homosexual orientation, in which he is sexually, romantically or emotionally attracted to people with same gender as them. While transgender concerns gender

identity, which refers to a person's internal sense of being female, male or something else. Gay concerns sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a person's preference of sexual, romantic or emotional attraction toward men, woman or both sexes. Sexual orientation is usually divided into three: heterosexual, gay/lesbian, and bisexual. Heterosexual is an orientation in which a person is attracted to their opposite sex, gay/lesbian is the one who attracted to same sex (lesbian is a female who is sexually, romantically or emotionally attracted to another female), and bisexual is the one who is attracted to both sexes ("Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality").

I intend to raise more awareness of the issues that LGBT people (in this case from transgender's and gay's perspective) are facing through this thesis. I decide to compare two films which I believe will make the audience relate to and empathize with LGBT people.

The first film is *Boys Don't Cry*, which displays the reality of inhumane treatment that transgender people received in the early nineties in the United States. The film explicitly deals with the issue by displaying the transgender protagonist's conflicts he is struggling against his conservative community, which makes him closeted about his gender identity. This film is directed by Kimberly Peirce. Even though she is not as productive as other directors at that time, *Boys Don't Cry* does achieve numerous awards ("Boys Don't Cry - Complete Awards List") which further proves her credibility of directing a worthy film. Moreover, Peirce is a lesbian, so she knows how it feels to be treated as an LGBT. She also lived for two years in Japan (Jenkins), which broadens her mind to foreign values.

The second film is *Holding the Man,* which I consider to be comparable with *Boys Don't Cry* because the protagonist experiences the same hardship and prejudice from people who reject him, although his conflicts happen because he is being open about his sexuality. *Holding the Man's* setting takes place in Australia in the eighties when the environment is not very friendly towards the LGBT community. This film is directed by Neil Armfield, an Australian film, theater, and opera director who is well known in the film industry from his work *Candy* (2005) and *Holding the Man* (2015). He is gay, and also known to usually incorporate his view as a gay man into his work, more explicitly in *Holding the Man* (Wendt).

As for the approach, I will mainly use formalism because both of the films explicitly display the conflict and the problem that I will discuss in my paper. I provide some information based on a queer theory, but I only treat it as a background. Besides the queer theory, I also refer to some cinematography theories as a background. I will give brief explanations about what film studies is and how cinematography techniques help me to interpret the film scenes.

The world of films is dynamic. From time to time, the function of films also develops. At first, general audience sees films as a media of entertainment, but in its development, filmmaking turns into a form of art. Cinema's dynamism could be used as a "canvas" for the directors to convey their technological, philosophical, political, aesthetic, psychological knowledge or express personal message just like any artists may do with their arts. And for those who are film enthusiasts, studying films will give them exponential satisfaction for the art of films will always develop by time, making it more than just a media of entertainment (Villarejo 1-9).

The following description about film studies is taken from the book *Understanding Movies* by Louis Giannetti. Film studies concerns with some aspects like cinematography (camera movements and lighting) and mise-en-scène (costumes, properties, settings, actor placements). The first aspect of cinematography is camera shots. Camera shots are varied depending on how many subject matters are included within the frame taken. There are many kinds of shots in cinema, but most of them are categorized in six categories: extreme long shot, long shot, full shot, medium shot, close-up, and extreme close-up. However, the term may vary among different directors because a medium shot for one director could be considered a close-up shot for others, so generally, shots are determined based on how much the human figure is in the view (11). Extreme long shot is a shot taken from a very long distance, and if there are any people included in this shot, they usually appear as mere specks making them appear unimportant and vulnerable. This shot is usually found in epic films (11-12). Long shot usually corresponds roughly to the distance between the stage and the audience in live theater. Full shot is the closest range within this category, which includes the human body in full from head to toe. Medium shot shows the characters from knees or waist up. This shot is a functional shot that is useful for dialogue, carrying movement, and for shooting exposition scene (12). Close-up shows very little to no environment and only focus on relatively small objects such as the character's face. Extreme close-up is a variation where it shows only the character's eyes or mouth. This shot is usually used to emphasize the importance of a character or things, symbolic significance and to suggest an intense mood (13).

Universitas Kristen Maranatha

The second aspect of cinematography is camera angle. Angles can represent many meanings from an image. An angle is determined by the placement of the camera instead of the photographed subject. Filmmakers usually tend to avoid extreme angles in exposition scenes. There are five basic angles in cinema: bird's eye view, high angle, eye-level shot, low angle, and oblique angle. Bird's eye view is usually used to give the audience an all-seeing perspective, giving impression that the characters in the scene look insignificant. High angle is usually used to make the characters look powerless and/or trapped. Eye-level shot is a neutral shot which is usually used in most scenes. Low shot angle is usually used to make the characters look powerful and threatening. Oblique angle involves camera tilt which gives a sense of irresolution and visual anxiety. (13-17)

The third aspect of cinematography is lighting. Lighting in cinema has some different styles depending on the theme and mood of the films. There are three kinds of lighting: High key lighting, high contrast, and low key lighting. High key lighting is usually used in comedies and musicals. It consists of bright illumination with few visible shadows to give positive, cheery vibe. High contrast is usually used in melodramas and tragedies with harsh shafts of lights and dramatic streaks of blackness. Mysteries and thrillers usually favor low key lighting with diffused shadows and atmospheric pools of light to give sense of mysteriousness and uneasiness. Lighting key is only an approximation. Thus, some images consist of lighting styles combination. (18-22)

Mise-en-scène (pronounced /ˌmiːz ɒn ˈsen/) ("Mise en scène") is basically how the visual materials are staged, framed, and photographed. This includes settings, properties and actor placements, and gestures. It is borrowed from French

theatrical term which means "placing on stage." As in previous cinematography aspects, mise-en-scène is also used to convey meaning and/or messages from a scene through the settings, properties and actor placements and gestures in the frame. For example, when one character is positioned higher than other character, it could mean that particular character is more powerful, while characters that are equally positioned with similar gestures could mean that they are interested in each other. Mise-en-scène can also be presented with the placement of properties. For example, when a character is placed in a small room with cluttered objects all over it, it could be signifying that the character is trapped in a state of chaos. (44-67)

My analysis will be supported by the screenshots which I interpret based on the techniques above, albeit not all of the cinematography aspects are applied in analyzing the conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What are the conflicts in the film?

2. What is the cause of the conflicts?

3. What is the resolution of the conflicts?

4. How do the films visually show the conflicts?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the social conflicts in the film.

2. To show the cause of each conflict.

3. To show the resolution of each conflict.

4. To show how the films visually show the conflicts.

Method of Research

In writing my thesis, I use the method of library research. First, I watch Peirce's and Armfield's film as the primary texts. Then I read several sources from the Internet and reference books to analyze the films that are relevant to the topic of my thesis to support my analysis. Finally, I draw some conclusions of what is discussed.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. In Chapter One, I present the Introduction, consisting of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two, I analyze the social conflicts in Peirce's *Boys Don't Cry*. In Chapter Three, I analyze the social conflicts in Armfield's *Holding The Man*. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the synopsis of the films and the biography of the directors.