

**THE RIGHT FOR RECOGNITION OF LESBIANISM
IN KIMBERLY PEIRCE'S *BOYS DON'T CRY*:
A FEMINIST APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Boys Don't Cry is a 1999 independent drama film based on the real life story of Brandon Teena, a young transman who has raped and murdered by his male friends after they found out he had female genital on December 30, 1993 and directed by Kimberly Pierce and also was written by Kimberly Peirce and Andy Bienen ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/boys_don't_cry_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/boys_don't_cry_(film))). The film features Hilary Swank as Bradon Teena, Chloe Sevigny as Lana Tisdel; Peter Sarsgaard as John Lotter, Brendan Sexton III as Tom Nissen, Alicia Goranson as Candace and Jeanetta Arnette as Mrs. Tisdel. *Boys Don't Cry* was released by Fox Searchlight Pictures and the duration running in 166 minutes. The film is set in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Fall City, Nebraska but was filmed in Greenville Texas.

Kimberly Pierce was born in September 8, 1967, Harrisburg Pennsylvania, USA, and she has a younger brother. She has B.A in English and Japanese literature from University of Chicago and an M.F.A in film from Columbia University. She lived in Japan for two years and worked as a photographer, and has written magazine article about film. Graduated from Miami Sunset High School in Miami, Florida and is a former classmate of comedian Mark Ginzo and also considered directing memoirs of Geisha in 2005. While taking graduate film classes at Columbia in New York, she had

read in an April 1994 issue of the village voice about the life and death of Teena Brandon of Brandon Teena as she came to be known. Brandon Teena's story made headlines that year. She was, in physical term, a female. But Brandon loved women. When she cut her hair and ventured from Lincoln to Falls City, she told everyone she was Brandon, a guy, and started winning the hearts of several females and falling in love with one.

Kimberly was moved that she knew she had to tell the story on film. So she went to Fall City to research, she went to the farm house, sat in the room in which Brandon was executed along with two witnesses. She interviewed people who knew her, hung out at the convince store where Brandon hung out. She attended at the trials of the two men later convicted in Brandon's killing. She was researched with her subject in Nebraska and interviewed lesbians and transsexuals; she set out to make her film. She started to work on the screenplay, and four years later finished with help from screenwriting partner Andy Bienen. Then there was the matter of raising enough money to shoot it. She struggled at first, but in the final year the finances started rolling in, in fact before the lead actress was signed. She was looking all over the country, but there was no girl who could play Brandon. Because a videotape arrived in the mail, finally she found the girl who could play Brandon and this beautiful, androgynous person just floated across the screen, cowboy hat on, big sock in his pants, gorgeous boy jaw, boy voice, boy ears, boy eyes, boy forehead.

It was Hilary Swank, whose previous work had included television experience, as well as feature film like "The next karate kid" (1994) and

“Buffy the vampire slayer” (1992). Because her allegiance to her obsession with the subject, then she hired Swank but demanded that she live as a guy for four weeks prior to filming, go to store, the restaurant, the bathroom, dressed and acting like a guy. In its finished state *Boys Don't Cry* rides a crest of freedom as Brandon becomes the person she always wanted to be.

Actually there is no “one” reason that can make Kimberly so untested to make *Boys Don't Cry* exactly, but there are some reasons that can make Kimberly interested to make a film *Boys Don't Cry* “her obsession with the research for answer to a hate crime”, “She had read in April 1994 issue of The Village Voice about in physical term of female but she loved women” and her sentence herself” it’s almost like the love affair became more beautiful in a way because of the way she held to her love. She felt this absolute spiritual love for Brandon. It was like a soul love”
<http://www.cnn.com/showbiz/movie/9910/22/boys.dont.cry>

Boys Don't Cry on Rotten Tomatoes, a website which received and collects reviews from film critics and tallies a total score out of 100 (under 60 being “rotten” over being “ certified “fresh) and *Boys Don't Cry* currently holds a 88/100 being “fresh”
http://www.rottentomatoes.com/in/Boys_Don't_Cry). Although *Boys Don't Cry* is independent drama film and but it became financed and a relatively low budget production but it became a huge success film and received awards and nominations. Best actress in a leading role (Hillary Swank) and nominated best actress in supporting role (Chloe Sevigny) in Academy Awards, Best

performance by an Actress in Motion picture and Best performance by an Actress in Supporting Role in Golden Globe Awards, Breakthrough performance female and Outstanding Directorial Debut (Kimberly Peirce) in National Board Review, Best Performance by an Actress in Motion Picture Drama (Hilary Swank), Best Performance an Actress in Supporting Role-drama (Chloe Sevigny), nominated Best Pictures-Drama and Nominated Best Director (Kimberly Peirce) in Satellite Award, Best New Film maker For Boys Don't Cry in BSFC Award. In Addition film critic Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times listed it as one of five best films of 1999 and in 2006. Premiere magazine put Swank's performance in 83 rd place in its list of the 100 greatest movie performance of all time; it also ranked it as one of the "25 most dangerous film".

Teena Brandon is a transman (born female) or a young woman with a gender identity crisis, who identifies and lives his life as a male under the name of Brandon Teena. He wishes to start a new life and also to do so, than he decides to moves to Falls City, Nebraska. One night, Brandon encounters Lana Tisdell and her friends, ex convicts John Lotter, Tom Nissen and Candace. Brandon quickly develops a friendship with Lotter, Nissen, and Candace and becomes romantically involved with Lana, who is unaware of his biological sex. Brandon moves in with Lana and her mother. During his time in Fall City, Brandon gains popularity with many local residents.

Soon after, Brandon is jailed for forging checks. He is put in the women's section of the Fall City prison. Lana then provides money to get

Brandon out of jail on bail. Upon questioning Brandon on why he was put into a woman's prison. Brandon falsely tells Lana he was born a hermaphrodite, and will soon receive a sex change. Lana then declares her love for Brandon, "no matter what he is" and the two pursue a sexual relationship. Her circle of friends (John Lotter, Nissen, Candace) subsequently learns that Brandon is anatomically female, Candace is not distressed over the discovery, but Nissen and Lotter become extremely angered. They then come after Brandon while he is staying at Lana's mother's house where they force Brandon to strip off his pants to reveal to Lana his "true" identity. Lana only looks when forced to.

Later on that week, Nissen and Lotter pursue Brandon and violently rape him in Nissen's car at a factory and they treat him. They return with Brandon to Nissen's house. Although injured, Brandon escapes from Nissen's bathroom by climbing out of window. Lana convinces him to file a police report, though Brandon had been warned by Nissen and Lotter to remain silent. Brandon, in distress, then files a report on the situation. Nissen and Lotter become drunk, and despite Lana's warnings, set out to kill Brandon. He is hiding in a farm house with Candace and her baby. Brandon, along with Candace, is shot, while Lana is screaming desperately for them to stop. Lotter and Nissen continue shooting her. Lana wakes up on Brandon's dead body the next morning and falls into her mother's arms. The film ends with Lana leaving Fall City as a letter of Brandon's (written by Brandon to Lana before he die) is read in a voice over.

Boys Don't Cry is one of literary work, and *Boys Don't Cry* is a movie interesting to analyze, because the movie shows and tell about the right and recognition as human being, like woman and man who love each other although as transgender woman, was born hermaphrodite, and loved woman. Besides, describes about the romantically relationship between Brandon Teena and Lana Tisdel after she knew that Brandon is a woman.

Lesbianism is female homosexuality (Webster, 2006: 614). Lesbianism is not a disinclination to love man; it's rather an inclination, a positive, emphatic, emotional and in most instance, physical response to another woman (Symson and Jacques 2007: 7). The word lesbianism is derived from Lesbos (Λέσβος), a Greek island located in the East Aegean Sea where the ancient Greek Lyric poet Sappho lived and ran a school for Girl in the 6th century BC.

Lesbianism has huge controversy today becoming an increasingly important problem. Because of modernization of life style and another specific reason of each lesbian that may makes fear of people, parent, event some sexologist that lesbianism becomes "unhealthy life style" and "forbidden sexuality life style". Sexual orientation refers to the direction of a person's romantic and sexual attraction. There are many common sexual orientations, such as: heterosexuals are people primarily attracted to another people of the opposite gender, homosexual (gay and lesbian) are woman or men who attracted to same gender, bisexual are people can be attracted to someone of same and opposite gender, and asexual are not romantically or sexually

attracted to other people, they may enjoy with relationships. The American Academic of Pediatric has stated that sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesbian>). But as human being lesbian whose love and natural appetite, they loved women and they want to have sex with woman. That is reason why lesbians are striving to get their rights. All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All human rights are universal, independent, indivisible and interrelated. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to every person's dignity and humanity and must not be the basis for discrimination or abuse.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in analyzing the movie within the feminist approach. Therefore, the writer is interested in conducting this research entitled **'THE RIGHT FOR RECOGNITION OF LESBIANISM IN KIMBERLY PEIRCE'S *BOYSDON'T CRY: A FEMINIST APPROACH*'**.

B. Literature Review

As far as the writer knows from the analysis of *Boys Don't Cry* movie with feminist approach and other approaches, there is no research which has been conducted related to this movie in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta. Thus the writer decides to conduct a research on the right for recognition of lesbianism.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of this study is “How to get the right for recognition of lesbianism is depicted Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry*”.

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the writer focuses on the human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity in *Boys Don’t Cry* movies directed by Kimberly Peirce, screenwriting Andy Bienen and Brandon Teena as the major characters by using feminist approach.

E. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem that has stated above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the movie based on the structural elements
2. To analyze the movie based on the feminist approach

F. Benefit of the Study

The benefits expected from the study as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The study is expected to give contribution on development of knowledge, particularly the literary, structural elements and feminist approach on *Boys Don’t Cry* movies.

2. Practical Benefit

The study is expected help the writer to enrich her knowledge dealing a social problem and curiosity about the right and recognition of lesbianism in *Boys Don’t Cry* movie.

G. Research Method

The writer will describe the methods that use on research. There are five elements to support in research method they are:

1. Type of the Research

In analyzing Kimberly Peirce *Boys Don't Cry* the writer uses descriptive qualitative research, it does not need statistic to analyze the material.

2. The Objective of the Study

The type of data is text and movie observation. The data that she gained is by observing the structural elements in the both version.

3. Type of Data and Data Source

In this study the writer uses two sources of data:

a. Primary data source

The primary data of the study is the Kimberly Peirce's *Boys Don't Cry*.

b. Secondary data source

The secondary data are taken from other source such as the books and some articles which have relation with the primary data and the other material support this research.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The writer uses library research to collect the data in processing data. The writer will conduct the following steps:

a. Watching the movie several times

- b. Identifying the topic of the movie
- c. Selecting of data using structural analysis
- d. Taking notes for the important part both of the primary and secondary data
- e. Categorizing and comparing both.
- f. Drawing the conclusion of the analysis

5. Technique of Analyzing data

It is descriptive analysis. In analyzing the subject matter, the writer analyzes structural elements of the movie and then analyzes the subject of the study by using feminist approach. The next step is drawing conclusion from the analysis.

H. Paper Organization

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is an introduction, which includes background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. Chapter II is underlying theory; it deals with elements and theoretical application. Chapter III is social background of twentieth century. Chapter IV is structural analysis of the movie. Chapter V is feminism analysis that deals with discussion, and the last chapter VI is the conclusion and suggestion.