

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

It is undeniable that each person's sexual tendency is never the same. Some of the people have interest in the opposite sex (heterosexual orientation) while on the other hand, some others interest in the same sex (homosexual orientation). Usually, the ones who become homosexual are included in the group of sexual minorities. This condition happens because there are some norms in society that are considered as the standard to determine the supremacy of heterosexuality and they are glorified by many people. This norm is called *heteronormativity*.

According to Foucault in his book *The Archeology of Work*, *heteronormativity* is "a theory of normative judgment and refers to heterosexuality as a social institution with particular forms of practices that divide the 'normal' from 'abnormal'" (qtd. in Hjaltadottir and Eddenheim 2). In other words, heteronormativity is a tool to make heterosexuality becomes superior since it differentiates heterosexuality from homosexuality and determinates which one is right and wrong. Therefore, Foucault uses the term 'normal' and 'abnormal'. In his other work *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault also adds that heteronormativity appeared in the nineteenth century based on Victorian doctrine to avoid the royal family member from being homosexual

(1). Therefore, heteronormativity became one of the strongest norms that should be glorified by the people or society at the time. Since this doctrine is famous and many countries are influenced by it, heteronormativity still exist until this present day and it is glorified by society.

In Annamaria Jagose's *A Queer Theory: An Introduction*, heterosexuality is such an understanding is voiced in a number of different discourses, ranging from popular psychology—which offers supposedly reassuring accounts of homosexuality as a stage through which adolescents pass before maturing into heterosexuals—to those religious and legal definitions of 'family' by which homosexual family groupings are declared illegitimate or inauthentic (20). In other words, heterosexuality, the norm that is promoted by heteronormativity, causes the legalization of a family that is build by different sex couple. As the result, homosexual family is considered as the wrong one or not normal.

Another definition about heteronormativity is stated by Deborah A. Feund in her book *Interrupting Heteronormativity*. According to Feund, heteronormativity is described as “an ideology based on definitions of what it means to be a woman or a man that exclude and discriminate against a significant minority population” (1). In other words, heteronormativity propagates how man and woman should act based on their sex and gender properly, and those who do not obey this rule is considered as minorities or inferiors and they are often discriminated. The discrimination in here means the

negative perception toward some people who are considered as non-normative such as homosexual, transgender, and many others.

Since heteronormativity promotes the importance of heterosexuality, it causes hatred and marginalization toward the homosexual people. This phenomenon can be seen in the real-life society. For instance, the homosexual people are often treated differently by some others who consider themselves as the 'right' or the 'straight' (heterosexual). They do not get the proper job and the same right as the straight people get. Even in some cases, they are considered as bad influence and main endemic of some dangerous illnesses such as HIV. The same condition happens in political activities such as national service (military), in which the homosexual men are often not permitted to join because they are not considered as the true men. Because of that marginalization, the homosexuals are often worried about their condition. Usually, they have no bravery to show or express their sexual attraction in front of public because they are afraid of being discriminated.

The inferiority toward the homosexuals as the effect of heteronormativity does not only happen in reality but also in literary world. In some stories, the homosexual characters often get difficulties to express their love because the social environment around them glorified heteronormativity. For instance, the relationship between Olive and Verrena in Henry James' *The Bostonian* or the relationship between Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist in Annie Proulx's *Brokeback Mountain*. Those stories contain the complicated love affair

since the characters have different sexual tendency from the heterosexuality that is believed and propagated by the people or society around them. As the result, they have no courage or bravery to admit and express their love because they are sure that society will refuse it.

One of some interesting stories that contain a complicated and hidden love of homosexual character is Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. This story was written in 1912 and won Nobel Prize for Literature in 1921. It is a story about a German successful writer named Gustav von Aeschenbach who lost his imagination and inspiration to write a story, and decides to take rest in Italy for a while in order to get his imagination back. During the holiday, he is staying in a hotel near a beach in Venice and likes watching the children of some Polish aristocrat families who play in the bank of the beach. One day, he sees an extremely handsome fourteen-year-old boy named Tadzio. Having been amazed by the charm of the boy, von Aeschenbach starts writing many stories about the handsome young boy and all the beauty of nature. Everyday he watches Tadzio playing with some other boys from his balcony and over the time, he realizes that he falls in love with Tadzio. However, he has no bravery to tell what he feels since he himself feels strange with that feeling. As the result, von Aeschenbach keeps his love in silence and he spends most of his time stalking at Tadzio.

Unfortunately, a very dangerous endemic called cholera appears and spreads in almost the entire Europe including Italy. Many people died so that

von Aeschenbach's family becomes worried and asks him to leave for Germany. Moreover, von Aeschenbach becomes very ill and he is suspected to suffer from cholera. Sadly, von Aeschenbach leaves Italy. However, when the ship von Aeschenbach boards almost reaches Germany, one of his important suitcases is left in the cottage and he has to take it back. Happily, he returns to Italy with the positive hope to meet Tadzio again. However, he still has no chance to express his feeling for the boy. Even worse, von Aeschenbach is fully infected by the cholera and his illness is getting more and more severe, while his love to Tadzio is getting stronger and stronger. One day, when he sees Tadzio is bullied by his other friend, von Aeschenbach decides to help him and also tell the boy about his feeling before death comes to him. Unfortunately, he died for cholera just before he can do his effort.

From here, the writer is interested in analyzing the hidden love of Gustav von Aeschenbach toward Tadzio as the result of heteronormativity. Using the concept of heteronormativity in queer studies that is introduced by Michael Warner, the love of von Aeschenbach and how he deals with that feeling are going to be analyzed in this thesis.

B. Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the writer states the problems as follows:

1. How does heteronormativity affect Gustav von Aeschenbach's complicated feeling of love in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*?
2. How does von Aeschenbach struggle to deal with feeling of his complicated love within the heterosexual society around him?

C. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To uncover the influence of heteronormativity that cause Gustav von Aeschenbach's complicated feeling of his love.
2. To uncover the way von Aeschenbach deals with his complicated love among the heterosexual society.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be very useful for the readers or anyone who wants to study about queer studies, especially the concept of heteronormativity and how it affects the view of people about sexuality. Moreover, in this modern era, there are many issues about sexuality that are no longer banned or censored as what happened during the Victorian era. The writer also hopes that the comprehension about heteronormativity which the reader may get from this study is able to help them to be more critical about any queer literature and how

the norm of society affects the characterization and the story of the queer in literary works.

E. Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on the love of Gustav von Aeschenbach that becomes complicated as the result of the existence of heteronormativity. The novel that becomes the chosen story is Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Meanwhile the object that is going to be analyzed by the writer is Gustav von Aeschenbach, the main character who carries homosexual and heteronormativity issue, who falls in love with a handsome young boy named Tadzio. The writer only focuses on von Aeschenbach's because almost the entire story describes his feeling and his thought as the main character, while other characters are only become the partner of von Aeschenbach's life. The theory that is used by the writer is the concept of heteronormativity in queer theory that is introduced by Michael Warner. Meanwhile the second focus of this thesis is the way Gustav von Aeschenbach struggle his love surrounded by heterosexual people around him.

F. Theoretical Background

The writer decides to use the concept of heteronormativity that is stated by Michael Warner as the theory to analyze the love of von Aeschenbach and

how the character deals with his feeling within the heterosexual society around him.

According to Michael Warner in his book *Public and Counterpublic*, the term “heteronormativity” is used to more effectively probe the “complex cluster of sexual practices [that] gets confused, in heterosexual culture, with the love plot of intimacy and familialism that signifies belonging to society in a deep and normal way” (194). It means that in heteronormativity, the right or the normal sexual relationship is between man and woman in marriage. Other relationships are considered as wrong. Therefore, there is the term *familialism* in Warner’s statement which is identical with marriage.

In *Public and Counterpublic*, Warner also adds that a whole field of social relations becomes intelligible as heterosexuality, and this privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy. This sense of rightness—embedded in things and not just in sex—is what we call heteronormativity (194). It means that heterosexuality carries the values that are considered as the right sexual tendency in its practice. In addition, heterosexuality is not only about sex, yet also love and other thing that considered as normal such as being bonded in marriage.

In addition, Warner also states that heteronormativity pervades every aspect of our lives and work (24). It means that as norm, heteronormativity has been the strongest value in society so that it does not only influence the

relationship or marriage but also other aspects of people's life such as educational, political, and social aspect.

G. Methods of the Study

To analyze the issue of heteronormativity in this literary work, the writer use the method of close reading to get the comprehension about the story and the chosen issue. In this step, the writer is identifying the ways the society's heteronormativity affects von Aschenbach's feeling of love. After that, the writer identifies how heteronormativity is portrayed inside the story until it affects the love of Gustav von Aschenbach. Then, the writer synthesizes all of the findings in the novel by supporting them with the secondary sources on queer theory (*Public and Counterpublic* by Michael Warner) and other article or related studies as well as how they are applied in the novel. After that, the writer identifies the way von Aschenbach deals with the heteronormativity.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Queer : Weird, strange, abnormal. Nowadays, it is used as the umbrella for the LGBT movement.

Heteronormativity : A norm of sexuality based on the concept that the right and normal relationship is a relationship between man and woman in marriage, not sin.

Heterosexuality : A sexual behavior that is propagated as the right or the straight in society as the result of political hegemony by heteronormativity. Heterosexuality is the sexual and emotional relationship between man and woman or opposite sex.

Homosexuality : A sexual behavior that is prohibited and considered as wrong in heteronormativity rules. It is kind of sexual and emotional interest in the same sex such as man loves man or woman loves woman.

Hidden Love : An untold homosexual love as the result of the supremacy of heterosexuality in society.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW