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THE CLOSET, THE WINDOW, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

Notes on Brokeback Mountain

BY VINCENZO BAVARO

It's my world that I want to have a little pride in,
my world and it's not a place I have to hide in.
[...]It's one life and there's no return and no deposit,
one life so it's time to open up your closet.

Jerry Herman, *I am what I am*¹

In the last image of Ang Lee's movie *Brokeback Mountain*, the protagonist, Ennis, is seen shutting his closet—a sign of gay containment and self-denial—while the camera looks motionlessly toward the open window, made fully visible by the shutting of the closet. Paradoxically, it is exactly the formal closure of the closet—this ultimate gesture of acceptance of one's own oppressed condition—that highlights another possibility, a potential emancipation to be gained outside of the window. The verses of Herman's lyrics that I have used as an epigraph, taken from one of the manifestos of the gay liberation movement, present a similar opposition between two spheres: on the one hand, elements of marginalization and deprivation (*to hide, closet*); on the other hand, the explosion of an uncontrollable desire for realization and presence (*my world, one life, pride*). In the last verse, the closet marks an invitation to express what has been repressed and marginalized, operating exactly on the basis of an outside, of a world that lies outside of our windows.

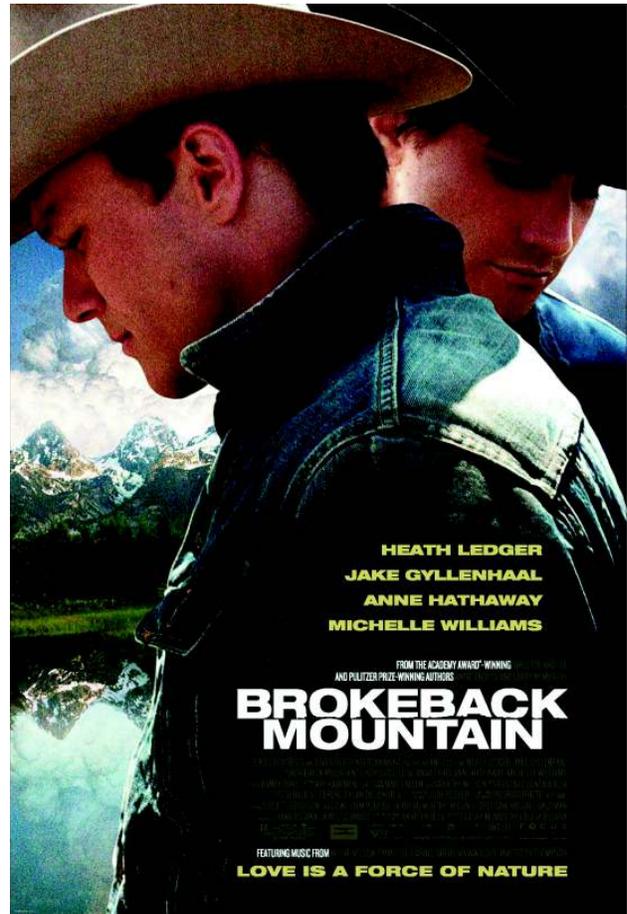
Windows and closets, in fact, recur throughout the movie and are highlighted in several scenes, especially in the second half of the story, when a binary between self-expression and self-repression and between realities and possibilities begins to take shape. At Alma and Ennis's home, while waiting for Jack to visit him, Ennis nervously keeps looking out the window, yearning for that possibility to come true. The following day, it is Alma who looks through the window at Jack waiting by his van, and later, when she looks at her husband getting on the van again, what she sees outside the window, like what she had seen through the open door the day before, is a reality corroding her relation with Ennis and her vision of her own life. In their turn, closets are crucial in the scene where both protagonist are simultaneously getting ready for their next meeting and

looking for things in their closets: Jack cannot find his parka, and asks Lureen about it; Ennis forgets to take his (brand new) creel case, and is reminded by Alma. In both sequences the movie suggests a certain degree of awareness in the two women, and especially as regards Ennis, it shows that the fiction of the closet, the fiction of the two "fishing buddies", is too unstable and that eventually it is going to break down. Finally, in the scene at Jack's parents'

house, Ennis enters Jack's room, and before discovering the closet, he opens the window and sits looking outside. Interestingly enough, the views framed by these windows are absolutely ordinary, in stark contrast with the beautiful landscapes on *Brokeback Mountain*.

The images of windows and closets thus become tropes for a binary between presence and evasion, between a possibility of self-realization and a desire for containment. This binary, I will contend, also applies to the movie as a whole. Indeed, one of its more striking aspects is the coexistence it establishes between, on the one hand, its mainstreaming operation, its ability to normalize and domesticate a story that presents some of the more typical issues concerning gay culture and, on the other hand, the possibilities that it seems to offer for an explicitly po-

litical reading, in terms of queer political activism. To state it more precisely, the very operations aimed at "mainstreaming" the story staged by the movie offer crucial keys to support what I would call a gay appropriation of *Brokeback Mountain*. The movie seems to perform a twofold operation: it embodies a desire for containment—that is, the wish to inscribe the story into a frame in order to exorcize its unsettling, and in a sense explicitly political, power—, while at the same time it stages the collapse of this containment strategy. By focusing on oppression and the failure of self-realization, it justifies and endorses both the breaking of the frame and the desire for, as well as the necessity of, a political change in the actualities it describes. The first part of



Contributed Photo

HOMAGE TO LESBIANS

This is my homage to Lesbians
Daughters of Bilitis, Sisters of Sappho
singers and pleasure seekers
because we have something in common
because we both like the same thing
find pleasure in the same place.

When Sappho longs for Atthis
I long for Atthis
when she desires sleep
“on a soft girlfriend’s breast...”
she makes me too wish
for such soft pillows.

That gift of pleasant pain
she finds in the pink room
of another I find there
and that taste of love’s honey
I taste too.

So this is my homage to Lesbians
who imitate me:
who grease up
strap on that wagging dildo
like my own version permanently attached
sliding and thrusting
to those Lesbians
who when I asked why
if you don’t like men
why do you strap on a fake dick
to fuck and pretend,
this is my homage to that wise Lesbian
who answered my question, who said:

“It’s not the dick
we don’t like--
it’s what’s usually
attached to it.”

-Dan Wilcox

this essay will focus on the ways in which the movie attempts to perform what I termed a “mainstreaming,” while the second part will stress the possibilities for political appropriation that the movie seems to suggest.

Ang Lee’s film stages a rather typical gay story, narrating the protagonist’s discovery of his sexuality, the ensuing dynamics of denial, the two characters’ relation hindered by social constraints and by moral and ideological norms, and the subsequent exile of their

emotional-erotic sphere to a space of secrecy and evasion, in the closet. The success of the movie, which seems to prove its trespassing of the boundaries of the gay niche, may well be viewed as an exciting new phenomenon; simultaneously, though, it raises the question of the reasons for this apparently successful cross-over, at a time when we are witnessing, on the one hand, the embitterment of heterosexual and homophobic behavior and the rise of religious fundamentalisms, and on the other hand the struggle of the LGBT communities to achieve what has been termed a

“mainstreaming” through gay marriage, adoption laws, and (here in Europe) the so-called *Pacs*. This process of mainstreaming is a problematic challenge to imposed legal and social limitations and it signals the shift of the “desirable” to territories at present still deeply associated with heteronormativity; calling into question issues concerning the desire for State legitimation and “assimilation,” this mainstreaming is widely debated within the LGBT communities.²

Under certain respects, the filmic version is less troubling, more alluring, in short more “loveable” than the original version, and this can safely be ascribed to the cinema industry’s demand to appeal to the widest possible audience, selling its product to as many consumers as possible. An example of this market-oriented tension is the discrepancy between the two handsome actors of the movie, Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal, and the way the protagonists are introduced in the short story: Ennis, “high-arched nose and narrow face, [...] a little cave-chested, balanced a small torso on long, caliper legs,” and Jack, who “for a small man [...] carried some weight in the haunch and his smile disclosed buckteeth, [...] noticeable” (7-8).

Another aspect one should consider is the reduction of sex scenes: in Proulx’s version, one of the central scenes in the story is the meeting of the two men, after four years, and the night they spend in a motel “jouncing a bed” (23). On that occasion the two characters engage in a long dialogue rich in sexual references: “Christ,” says Jack to his partner, “it got a be all that time a yours ahorseback makes it so goddamn good” (24); and later Ennis says “I never had no thoughts a doin it with another guy except I sure wrang it out a hunderd times thinkin about you” (26).

Even though it is neither the main object of the story nor the element that justifies its telling, sex is constantly evoked and shown in the short story, thus compelling the readers to constantly face the actuality and the “practice” of this relation. Gay eroticism is probably still too disturbing to be associated with two fathers. How would the audience have reacted? And more importantly, what kind of audience does the movie want to address? In Lee’s movie, sex disappears from the visual horizon as soon as the story begins to take shape, as if to foster the identification of a wider audience with the love story. The filming of details and practices of gay sex

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Notes on Brokeback Mountain



Contributed Photo

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would have caused the opening of a deep chasm separating the movie from the romantic/mainstream/self-righteous audience.

One of the keys for the movie's mainstreaming could be found in the representational mechanism that frames the homosexual subject in terms of a "victim." In fact, the movie can work for the audience as an easy exercise in self-gratification and as an opportunity for a complacent self-declaration of open-mindedness. The relational dynamics with the audience promoted by the film, mainly based on emotional involvement rather than on a critical and detached perspective, makes it inevitable for the viewer to reject and denounce the homophobic violence evoked at the end of the story, especially since it is staged in the form of a murderous violence. The strategy based on the emotional inclusion of the audience, however, becomes politically fascinating since the scapegoat is a self-aware subject, willing to live his identity fully and outside of the closet; he is, to put it differently, the subject who is more willing to unsettle the hetero-normative social order.

With even more self-awareness than the

short story, the filmic version of *Brokeback Mountain* offers an interesting perspective on violence and male aggressiveness that somehow complicates the process I mentioned above as the "victimization" of the homosexual. Ennis's character emphasizes the derivative nature of violence, which is not represented as something unambiguously, authentically masculine, and functional to the character's catharsis. Quite the reverse, violence explodes when the protagonist is more exposed and fragile in emotional terms: in his relation with Jack, with his wife Alma and with whoever seems to question his normative masculine role, which is the only performance of masculinity recognized (and legitimized) both by the character and by the social context in which he lives. We see instances of this during the fireworks night, or with unknown passers-by. This paranoid orientation, whereby the character has to prove and stage iteratively his own "masculinity," drives him to tighten himself up further, as is manifest in the suspicious and aggressive way he keeps an eye on a van passing by, while talking to Jack in a scene following his divorce, and as is even-

tually made explicit in a dialogue the men have by a mountain stream.

Furthermore, a look at these dynamics may also draw attention to the fact that gender identifications are performed according to a complex network of ideologically based limits; in other words, no alternative resistance strategy is available to Jack other than the one he learned to be the only legitimate "masculine" behavior. What is further unsettled in the Thanksgiving Day sequence is the link between the behavior codified as normatively masculine and the subject performing it: since the subject is gay, that behavior loses its allegedly "necessary" relation with sexuality and is made visible as performance, and one that is as arbitrary as it is strategic. This puts us in a better position to understand the characters' masculine performances of gender—Ennis's in the first place—and their complex relation with sensitivity, defeat, and sorrow.

In Proulx's short story, the temptation to read the affair between Jack and Ennis as an unproblematic love story is

recurrently inhibited by the narrator's gaze on the characters' interiority and the focus on Jack's and Ennis's gaze on themselves, a feature that the movie does not seem keen to recover. At the end of their last meeting, after a highly emotional scuffle between the protagonists, in a flashback, an embrace that had taken place twenty years before comes to Jack's mind. In the movie the flashback remains, and that past scene seems to be a moment of harmony and happiness; the short story, however, suggests a murkier and more ambiguous reality:

Later, that dozy embrace solidified in his memory as the single moment of artless, charmed happiness in their separate and difficult lives. Nothing marred it, even the knowledge that Ennis would not then embrace him face to face because he did not want to see nor feel that it was Jack he held. And maybe, he thought, they'd never got much farther than that. Let be, let be. (44)

In the short story, the previous quotation is situated immediately before the reader learns about Jack's death, and thus it inhibits a freezing up of their affair in the reassuring terms of a transparent and mutual passion. The movie, instead, evoking the same flashback but erasing Jack's thoughts about that embrace, seems to elide the more troubling aspects of the affair in order to emphasize the more romantic ones, before fixing the story as homogeneous and clear at the end of the movie. In that sense, the placement of the scene immediately after the powerful sequence in which the protagonists consciously face the crumbling of their dreams and their frustration and unhappiness, seems to be a corrective, leading the spectator back into an idealized, unproblematic, and harmonic past; in the short story, instead, it is the continuity between that past and this present that is under the reader's focus, as the last sentences of the quoted passage stress clearly by shifting from the past to the present tense.

Looking at the affair between Ennis and Jack through the frame offered by the distribution means underestimating the dynamics of deletion and projection implied in the love story itself. In other

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So I say to my queer friends, won't you join me in love?
 Won't you join me and my sweet contribution to society?
 And as I walk down the aisle with my partner sho-enough,
 My queer friends behind me,
 fade,
 fade,
 fade,
 into the amnesia of my piety.

I cannot understand, why you look so sad my friend.
 Cannot you see now, that I can exist in truth?
 But as my peace pulses with a new fortified trend,
 Cracking are our bonds of strength once important in our youth.

My friend, queer friend, I too know what it's like,
 To live in shame and fear, to long and lust in strife.
 But now I have found happiness, atop a gilded spike,
 Waiting for my consumption, my conscious, our life.

An inkling tickles my brain to look in your direction.
 You sit at your bar still smiling, do you not know what you need?
 You want what we can have, you need my love and protection.
 Why don't you see me now, and cast off your dirty seeds?

You're pathetic, can't you see? Your lives are lost in shadows.
 So much sex and disease, no children, no future.
 Repent or your life will end in the queer gallows,
 Where life is inconceivable, and your gashes refuse my sutures.

I have children, a great job, my hubby tends the weeds,
 Our maid Juanita takes our boy to soccer practice once a week.
 You have decadence and poverty, no education or good deeds,
 And I slowly cannot help but consider you a freak.

You fucking make me sick, once friend, now memory.
 Queer is now a name to me which means only shit.
 I'm married, I exist, one day I hope you see,
 That living outside the box is really no good fit.

Fine, do what you will, ex-friend, history.
 Perhaps one day I'll see you buying tofu in Whole Foods,
 But I promise I'll ignore you for eternity,
 Unless you start resembling the heterosexual brood.

Please, queer friend, accept you're lesbian or gay.
 Or I'll forget you.
 You will not exist.
 I'm the HRC,
 And the Lambda Legal Defense.
 I'm white and I'm educated,
 And I know what I want.
 I want to exist, and be seen.
 I want protection from the storms.
 And I want to be all I can be,
 As long as it exists in power's form.

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words, it means pretending not to recognize that labeling their bond as “love” is both too easy and inappropriate, both excessive and limiting. Isolating and hypostatizing “real love” from such a complex and contradictory relationship risks to prevent us from facing the ambiguity inherent in the characters’ choices and their dynamics of desire and attachment. Indeed, if this is “a love that will never grow old,” as stated in the awards-winning song by Emmylou Harris included in the movie soundtrack, it is because it has never even grown up, it has never achieved a stage of “adulthood,” grounded as it is more on absence and fantasmatic projection than on presence and experience. To a careful reader or spectator, it would be very problematic to unequivocally ascribe the limits and obstacles in the protagonists’ relationship exclusively to social apparatuses and normative ideologies, thus crystallizing a canonical love story.

Marketing rules and distribution priorities, however, can also be appropriated as political tools, in so far as they can shape “a politics of heterogeneity,” that is, activate cross-over and inclusive coalition politics. These politics negotiate between different niches, between “local” agendas and “global” ones, and they show how local issues can raise global questions. They emphasize the necessity, for political agendas to be effective, of seeking common grounds among different conditions of oppression, valuing inclusiveness over fragmentation and over the celebration of alleged identitarian peculiarities. Homophobia and the ruling and sanctioning of gender identities are an issue that does not regard exclusively the LGBT communities, and that cannot be faced and challenged effectively inside the thick walls of group identity. Quite the reverse, it is intertwined with cross-over concerns, such as sexism, patriarchy, classism, racism—all elements of an ideological system that acts on its subjects by defining their possibilities, aspirations, and desires. Ideological apparatuses do not operate just by limiting our desires, but sometimes, significantly, by building those very desires.

Keeping in mind these considerations, it can be argued that *Brokeback Mountain* has the potential to activate a cross-over dialogue with its audience, through a discourse that goes beyond the issue of sexual orientation, and that is neither fully understandable nor fully containable within the love story

Join me, queer friend, or goodbye.

I, the object queer...

Fuck you, my gay friend.

Gay friend who wants marriage, who wants legitimation.

Gay friend who secretly desires my sex but scorns my existence.

Gay friend who lives on the currency of fear and ignorance.

Gay friend who courts conformity at the price of my death.

Fuck you, my gay friend.

I seriously hope you take a moment to actually see me.

LOOK AT ME!

I am different, damn right I am.

And I don’t want to sit atop your gilded spike.

Unless that spike is a well lubed dildo,

And still then, leave the room because you produce in me such sadness,

And I don’t think I could get off.

I like getting off. I like sex.

I like the diversity in which I can exist.

I exist with cool gadgets that make me writhe,

I exist in weird relations, snarky pride,

Empowering shame, loads of fun,

Some sad nights, but I chalk that up to being sorta human.

But the sadness I feel most at the moment has to do with you.

I miss you. I wish you were still around. We had fun,

All night long, in the dive bars, in the back rooms,

Different states of mind, and sometimes it would consume

Us with such intensity we’d forget that humanness, that sadness.

We’d curl up together and find new ways of relating never thought possible

By the heterosexual brood.

But then you found happiness in the form of a sedative.

You slowly went to sleep in a white-coated suburbia.

You forgot me, you forgot our friends.

You forgot the power dynamics of color, and you forgot the class dynamics of love.

You forgot that history is created, that life existed before,

That you existed before, in dynamic queer relationships.

You forgot your brothers and your sisters,

You forgot your brosters and your sithers.

You forgot your intersexed pals and your tranny grannies,

You forgot our friends that aren’t even aloud into the marriage chapels because there isn’t a wheelchair ramp!

And you forgot that life is not so simple,

But I am beginning to think you don’t remember, anything, prior to marriage.

Now you see freedom in the form of a prison.

And the bars may be the color of your skin but I still expect you to see them.

I am holding you accountable. And here’s a brief history lesson.

There was once a time when being gay was radical.

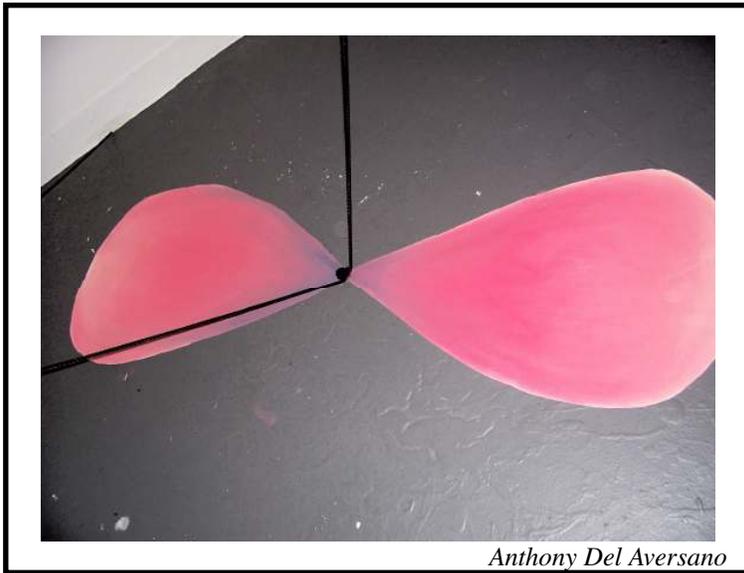
People would retch violently at the thought of a parade, in THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD!

Now we have Coors and Coke and Starbucks and Folgers marching with us,

Pouring their caffeinated, high-energy, color-blind capitalism down our thirsty throats.

Some of us had an allergic reaction and ran for the cover of night,
 While others let the liquid course through their veins and replace their blood.
 Marriage is the is blood-kin to capitalism, and you welcomed it with open arms,
 Into your family, into your capillaries, converting your heart into an institution.
 Family always reeked of oppression, but now it is stained with the memory of a
 queer past, that lingers.
 And I promise you will not be able to wash it out.

We exist, just in a different form. And I can speak and speak at what those forms are.
 After all, being queer means opening up to what all those forms might be.
 But on the topic of marriage, I cannot speak, because I don't exist, and though I
 scream,
 You seem to never hear, or if you do, you only seem to fear, and only think of you.



Anthony Del Aversano

No Such Freedom

I struggle with the answer to marriage. It is really not that simple.
 I am against marriage, but am also against discrimination.
 Bills and amendments, laws and repeal,
 Courts and states and rallies and secret deals.
 I vote no to the banning of gay marriage,
 Because I don't want discrimination as law.
 But why is this the primary agenda on the list?
 Why must this be the battle we are fighting for at all?
 The reasons tend to be fairly straightforward.
 Straight being key, forward making sense.
 "Rights," is the buzzword of the movement.
 The right to have children, or to see your children
 Hospitalized, banned from all non-family.
 The right to gain citizenship for your foreign lover,
 The borders erected so high, its almost if they exist in tangible form.
 Or even the right to inheritance, a founding purpose of marriage.
 So simple, so vague, yet so important for our notion of family.

But these are serious issues, that course through our minds.
 Racing and surging and clouding our judgment.
 It makes so much sense, how could you deny,
 Rights for all gays and lesbians is only fair.

frame; I will therefore propose a reframing of Brokeback Mountain as a narrative about the "pursuit of happiness." The pursuit of happiness is one of the inalienable rights sanctioned by the Declaration of Independence, side by side with those to life and liberty. In this story, happiness is presented either as a nostalgic projection of a fantasized past, few months on Brokeback Mountain, or in Jack's mind, as a hypothesis about a possible future. In each case, the pursuit of happiness proves to be a dangerous and subversive imperative in the narrative world evoked by the story, as evidenced by Jack's death and as Ennis had acknowledged years before: "if this thing... grabs all of us again...in the wrong place...in the wrong time...we're dead."³

Following their first meeting after that summer at Brokeback, when Jack first suggests building a new life together somewhere else, Ennis tells a story: when he was a child, his father took him and his elder brother to see the corpse of a man lynched for being a homosexual who lived with his partner, "two guys living together? No way." According to Ennis, his father played a prominent role in that murder. At the end of this flashback, Ennis makes a remark that recurs again as the ending line of the short story, and which is to be considered of crucial importance to an understanding of the political implications of this story, "If you can't fix it, Jack, you gotta stand it," to which Jack replies, significantly, "for how long?" The binary "fix it" vs. "stand it" thus takes on a twofold and paradoxically significance: on the one hand, it takes for granted the existence of unreachable goals, and thus the passive acceptance of (negative) things and situations as they are, but on the other hand, it simultaneously encourages an ultimate, decisive, and violent intervention in material conditions, in order to transform them.

Understanding happiness through a "fix it or stand it" lens is a strategy that seems to promote the passive acknowledgment and acceptance of the existing conditions, but it may be also understood—and especially by subaltern, oppressed, and silenced subjectivities—as an invitation to militancy, repositioning the pursuit of happiness on a political ground as a practice capable of effecting a change in the material conditions of oppression and oriented toward intervention in social life. Happiness is thus seen as something to search for, to build, capable of grounding

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itself in material existence, in the here and now. The movie can thus actually insinuate a reversal of the terms, emphasizing the fact that “if you can’t stand it, you gotta fix it!” and opening up new grounds for subversive fixings, for a radical challenge to the norms of “resolvability” of the problems being faced.

The natural landscape, wild forests, and mountains of Wyoming—though in fact the movie was filmed primarily in Alberta, Canada—are neither the location for an eventually fulfilling love story nor the site where happiness is finally found; on the contrary, they are the very symbols of impossibility and compromise. At the beginning, the story seems to confirm romantic fantasies about evasion and escape from society, but while heading toward the end of the story we are encouraged to recognize that desire for evasion is a dead-end.

Interestingly enough, Jack, who tenaciously looks for a path toward satisfaction and self-realization, seems to have no intention of moving to an isolated place in the middle of nature. From the start he plans to move to his father’s house with Ennis, or with another man, to fix the old ranch, later he suggests moving to Texas, and only at the end of the story does he think of going to Mexico. He is not at all thinking of escaping from society and finding shelter in a safe and separate space; on the contrary, he is claiming a position in a world familiar to him, close to him: to put it differently, he is affirming a need for what I mentioned previously as a mainstreaming process, a hypothetical “fixing” realized through a queer twist of the norm. Indeed, Jack’s first name, Twist, while apparently referring to his alleged sexual “deviation,” to his queerness, can also be taken to indicate his determination to change, to adjust dominant narrations—to fix them—, marking his refusal to accept them as they are, to stand them.⁴ The idea of moving with his partner to his father’s ranch is revealing as regards Jack’s position in relation to normative discourses: while seemingly repeating and confirming patriarchal lineage and dominant images of masculinity (the ranch, the “cow and calf operation”) he radically unsettles that logic by re-casting it in a queer way.

Jack’s idea of creating a space for himself within his father’s ranch can be regarded

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What bigger structures can we attack
For movement? For movement!
Because we’re at a crossroads, and we gotta to act fast
For movement! For movement!
Let’s work together, let’s think in force.
What powers and systems must break, must fall.
I have a few ideas, I have a few thoughts,
But we gotta work together, so I gotta hear back.

Education seems important, education right now.
Education for our kids, for ourselves right now.
Marriage can’t improve this, but it’s high on our list.
Come on, my queer friends, education right now!

Health care, we ask, health care right now.
I wanna see you when your sick, I want it now, I want it now.
Marriage can’t improve this, but it’s high on our list.
Come on, my queer friends, health-care right now!

Social Security! Insurance! Retirement!
When can we have these, for you, for me?
Does marriage really care about the aging queer dyke?
Come on, my queer friends, let’s take back the mile,
So we can live in style, so we can smile.

Racism.
Marriage! Will! Not! End! Racism!
It never has and it never will.
Do you even care, queer friend out there?
You wanna immigrate, you wanna keep your kid.
Come on, my queer friends, rethink this movement!
It’s the laws,
and the fear,
and the man,
and the hate.
OHHHHH!
But I really really really really really wanna live,
I wanna love, I wanna work, I wanna send my kids to school,
And I really really really really really wanna know
That I have security when I lay my head to rest.
I wanna fuck, I wanna learn, I wanna bring my lover home!
And I want to live a life of peace without turning to stone.

And I want to increase future hope, beyond its current crawl.

Well then, my queer friend,
Forget marriage, and knock down that fucking wall!
Whether racism or homophobia, or the actual border wall,
Forget marriage, and knock down that fucking wall!

Fear of an ending.

So I still have the questions, and many, many more.
They will never, ever stop, they are fuel for the cause.
But I’ll let you in on one of my biggest fears,

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as a similar appropriative gesture aimed at transforming a dominant and exclusionary discourse into an empowering tool of self-definition; this hypothesis would effectively enable him to get out of the closet, to get out of the mountain. On the other hand, the postcard of Brokeback Mountain, pinned up in Ennis's closet, in this view becomes less a memory of past fulfillment than a trope for failure and unhappiness, for a censored possibility and an unrealized love. Similarly, the shirts hanging in the closet, which on the one hand might be seen as a sign of an emotional fusion and union, on the other hand hold, in the blood stains, the evidence of the inner violence and resistance within the characters' relationship; while seemingly proposing a romantic scenario, both the postcard and the shirts conceal a set of painful contradictions that complicate the perception of the summer on Brokeback as a joyful and harmonious past.

Lee's movie, seen in the light of the "pursuit of happiness" and of a renewed emphasis on the actualization of desire, offers a challenge to the image of nature, and actually of Brokeback Mountain itself, as a safe haven and a favorite locus for self-realization. It may instead constitute a nightmare, an ultimately ineffective compromise resulting from a failure to cope with one's situation. For Ennis, the mountain becomes a closet where he stuffs desires he has never really tried to pursue, where he hides things he has never had the courage to assert—a place for regrets. In the screenplay, a dialogue between Ennis and his daughter is added at the end of the movie: his daughter invites him to attend her wedding, and while we are listening to Ennis repeating the same old justifications for not being able to do so, suddenly something changes, as if old renunciations and old denials had reappeared in his memory. Ennis changes his mind: he will find a way to be there. Then, in the last frame, we watch him finding the sweater his daughter has left behind and putting it into the closet, a fact that can indeed mark a small but necessary difference: for the first time the closet is not the site for accumulating what one has not been able to grasp, what one has first missed and then lost forever.

The bright and open window, in the last frame, offers a way out, a warning to keep in mind what we actually consider happiness to be, an invitation to keep the standards of our desires high. Shall we be satisfied with a

For it's why I wrote this little poem here:

Marriage must end, at least as a queer priority.
 Or we will never be able to move, stuck fast,
 Lost in a sea of fear and conformity,
 At the bottom of slippery basement stairs,
 In classrooms and offices on the campus edge,
 Wishing upon fading stars, and staring at the sun without blinking,
 Hoping that this tool of the fighting oppressed is more effective,
 Than the sign against my wall.
 Who knew English was a foreign language?
 And I'll lose the grip of my best friend's hand,
 And the crowd will envelop us, writhing, shaking.
 And when I find hir again, I will not recognize her.
 And no longer will I be able to remove my fake smile,
 Because when once I struggled to define queer,
 Now, I struggle no more, for it's so simple.
 Gays and lesbians can get married,
 And we cease to be queer at all.

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mountain in the closet? Shall we be satisfied with a life of marginality, or with expressing our aspirations within a containment frame? Or, on the contrary, are we going to reveal the oppressive function of such a frame by reversing its hierarchies and thus finding a path that leads us beyond its borders? Wherever that road may lead us, in the end, the pursuit of happiness will not take place within our closets, but rather in the world that lies outside our windows.

End Notes

¹ In the famous recorded version sung by Gloria Gaynor, actually, the last quoted verse has been changed into "one life so make sure you like what's in your closet," thus focusing no longer on the invitation to express one's repressed identity, but rather on the need to recognize and cherish what has been denied and marginalized.

² See Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" in *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 102-130.

³ Wherever the page number is not provided, quotations are drawn from the movie. This quotation from Ennis is referred, in the short story more clearly than in the movie, to Jack's and Ennis's first meeting outside Ennis's house, when Alma sees them passionately kissing each other.

⁴ Del Mar, Ennis's surname, can indicate, instead, the spoiling of something previously or potentially pleasant, perhaps the marring of Ennis's life itself. Marring, in the story's context, can be seen as a consequence to the incapacity of envisioning a potential fixing.

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Monica Bradley, received her undergraduate degree from the University of South Florida in Liberal Studies with a concentration in art studio. She is currently working on her Master's of Women's Studies at San Diego State University. Her primary areas of research are queer and feminist theories and their intersection with art practice.

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Fernando Carpaneda is an artist born in Brasília, Brazil. He works with clay sculptures. His main theme is always the human being. He watches people in the streets, bars, concerts, and places where people sell their bodies. Fernando makes portraits of rent boys, punks, junkies, thieves and outcasts. He uses objects that have a connection to the portrayed person to composing his work, such as cigarette butts, condoms, beer cans, underwear, semen, empty toothpaste boxes. In other words, things that are part of these people's real world, and his own. He uses such objects and remains as a beginning for his portraits. Clay is used as technique. He uses it the same way it was used in the 17th Century (for painting baroque saint images). He even dresses his sculptures with cloth from his own clothes.

Anthony DeLaversano, from Freehold, New Jersey. A recent graduate of Fairfield University with a Bachelor of Art in Art History. His work entitled, "Choke", is a mixed media comprised of nylon rope, pastel, and paper. The concept of his work is to show the connection between the rigid often judgmental views of society in relation to gender and the feeling of pain the GLBTIQ person goes through while simply trying to live. Though it can be seen as organic, a cell dividing, the scene on the floor shows a tight knot almost about to sever the circle in two. The black rope, society, does not allow the circle, the victim, to be free and whole.

Steph Finelli, an recent studio art graduate of Fairfield University.

Abby Gondek is a first year M.A. student in Women's Studies at San Diego State University. She is a graduate of Brandeis University in Psychology and Women's Studies. Her poetry has been published in: Free Your Voice, a Brandeis Women's Publication; Laurel Moon, a Brandeis Literary Magazine; and My First Crush Came From Israel, My Prom Date Came From Botswana: Brandeis Students Write About Cross-Cultural Relationships. Her research interests include: U.S./Brazil cross-cultural studies relating to Jewish/Black interracial relationships, Jewish feminisms & spirituality, and sexual coercion in relationships.

Meri Leon Hernandez's work is about identity and sometimes no identity all; the perpetual androgeny that makes up the background of whatever is taking place on the surface is a consistent theme of her work. How does gender relate to energy. And how does a human being grapple with another's view of gender when they have none. The concepts of gender are a constant thread in her work. Gender is connected to everything visibly or sublimally. So it is part of any base of action ie: political, artistic, personal, etc.

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