

Aging Queer and Transmediated Exclusion in Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain*

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Abstract

Compared with Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" (1997), Ang Lee's film adaptation (2005) adds to the iconic signs of becoming older. The sophistication of Jack and Ennis is represented through manifold medial forms, such as moving images showing aging appearances, auditory dialogues narrating the coexisting insistence and rejection of queerness, and emotional music as an indexical reference to the condition of mellowness but not fully aged (e.g., "A Love That Will Never Grow Old"). The target media product, by way of expansion, highlights the queer experience of exclusion, and colors this experience with a sovereign joy which flourishes amid conflicts, and reaches the apex after the other (Jack) passes away. As their older selves are entangled with the heteronormative world, an incremental exclusion gives rise to a liberatory sense. The analysis pursues the adaptation's transformation of the concept of exclusion via a spatiotemporal mode. Specifically, it explores the ways aging complicates the queer subjects' commitment to monogamous relationships, and the decision to remain closeted. It follows that the loss caused by being marginalized at earlier ages is somewhat redeemed by the wisdom unconsciously formed, but realized at a later phase of life.

Importantly, the exclusionary force regulating the social identity of "queer" and "aging" bears some relevance to the phenomenon of "disconnect" in our contemporary digital society. The users are queering themselves, whatever their sexual preferences, precisely through getting suspicious of superficial networking in virtual space, while recoiling from actual touch in life. The preferred act of receding into invisibility would shed light on the transmediated exclusion as an outcome of not being excluded, but thrusting exclusion upon oneself.

Keywords

Aging, queer, *Brokeback Mountain*, adaptation, transmediation

Bio

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