Beteckning: _____

HÖGSKOLAN
I GÄVLE

Department for Humanities and Social Sciences

From Brokeback Mountain to Brokeback Mountain – A Critical Study of the Adaptation Process from Short Story to Film

Cecilia Westergård
March 2009

C-Essay, 15 credits
English Literature

English C
Instructor: Gabriella Åhmansson Ph.D
Examiner: Alan Shima Ph.D

Table of contents

1. Introduction: Aim and Method…..…….3
Plot Summary……....……4
Narratology: Background and Definitions……5
2. Analysis: Original vs. Remake……...6
Characters: Static/Dynamic – Flat/Rounded……....8
Focalization…….11
Narrator and Voiceover……...13
Handling of Time: Framed Narrative, Flashbacks and Flash Forwards…….…16
Soundtrack……..18
3. Discussion: Changes Made…….....20
4. Summary and Conclusion.....…….……..21

Works cited……...25
Appendix……...27

1. Introduction: Aim and Method

How does as piece of writing change as it is re-written and more importantly, how does it change when it is re-written for another medium? What gets added and subtracted? Is the main storyline kept intact or does the adaptor change it in any way he or she likes? These are some of the questions that will be discussed from a narratological perspective in this essay. Annie Proulx's "Brokeback Mountain" will be the object of investigation: the short story that became widely known through its appearance in the *New Yorker* in 1997. Later on it was also published in Proulx's collection of short stories *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* in 1999. It became most famous of all, however, through the film medium; many (myself included) surely saw it without being aware that it was a screen adaptation. *Brokeback Mountain* was very much appreciated in its written form and its reputation grew even greater. One might even go so far as to say that it became a world wide phenomenon when it was adapted into a film by director Ang Lee, based on the screenplay by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. It was labelled as "a tale of two gay cowboys" (Proulx, GM 130) and the two actors playing the main characters were widely acclaimed for their performances. However, this is not what will be the main concern in this essay. As already mentioned, the purpose of this essay is to compare the short story to the screenplay and film and make note of things that separate them, but also point out what they have in common. Both the short story and the film will be investigated from a narratological perspective. To put it in the words of Jonathan Culler, focus

will lie on “notions of plot, of different kinds of narrators [and] narrative techniques” where the aim will be to “understand the components of narrative and [analyze] how particular narratives achieve their effects” (83). To begin with, there will be a short introduction to the plot of the short story *Brokeback Mountain*.

Plot Summary

The story takes place between the years of 1963 and 1982 in Wyoming in the United States of America. Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist, neither of them yet twenty, have been hired to work together as sheep herders up on Brokeback Mountain. Friendship evolves between the two young men, which soon develops into a love affair. They tell each other that this thing they have got going is only temporary; Ennis tells Jack “I’m not no queer” to which Jack replies “Me neither. A one-shot thing. Nobody’s business but ours.” (260). After their summer together is over, four years pass before Jack and Ennis see each other again. During this period of time Ennis has married Alma and together they have two daughters. When Jack pulls up to his house it is apparent that Ennis still has strong feelings for Jack; Alma sees them hugging and kissing, but decides not to say anything. Jack has also married and has a son but his heart still lies with Ennis. This is the way Jack’s and Ennis’ relationship carries on for almost twenty years; they see each other now and then on fishing and hunting trips where they know that they can be all by themselves, where no one can tell them what not to do, or even worse, hurt or kill them for the way they want to live their lives. They want to be together and Jack is the more optimistic one, trying to come up with ideas on how they can live their lives more in the manner of a couple, but Ennis is apprehensive of his suggestions. He is afraid that if someone catches them that will be the end of it all. Instead they carry on their love affair on the mountain where they are shielded from the surrounding world, until one day when a postcard Ennis has sent to Jack returns stamped “deceased”. Ennis calls Jack’s wife who tells him that he died when a tire blew up while fixing a flat on his car; apparently he had landed

on his back and suffocated on his own blood. Ennis is very sceptical whether this really is what happened to make Jack lose his life, or if foul play was involved. Whether true or not, Ennis goes up to see Jack's parents where he finds one of Jack's old shirts in his closet together with one of his own which he had up on Brokeback the first summer and he thought he had lost, neatly tucked into Jack's.

This is the major plot outline in both the short story and the movie. What is it then that set them apart from one another? Linda Hutcheon points out in *A Theory of Adaptation* that "[s]hort story adaptations [have to] expand their source material considerably" (19) and since the story "Brokeback Mountain" is only about 28 pages long in print that is exactly what Diana Ossana and Larry McMurtry have done. McMurtry says in the "From Script to Screen" extra material clip on the DVD "We used every bit of that story actually, every sentence is used somewhere in the screenplay . . . the problems in it were suggested, but we fleshed it out" and ends by adding that he and Ossana have included as much as can be included in a film adaptation. Before comparing the short story to the film, I will give a short introduction to narratology.

Narratology: Background and Definitions

What is then narratology and what is the main focus when doing a critical reading through a narratological perspective? In *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* Peter Barry gives his definition:

> [T]he study of how narratives make meaning, and what the basic mechanisms and procedures are which are common to all acts of story-telling. Narratology, then, is not the reading and interpretation of *individual* stories, but the attempt to study the nature of 'story' itself, as a concept and as a cultural practice. (222-223, author's italics).

Another important issue to mention is the narratological distinction of, on the one hand, ‘story’ and on the other hand, ‘plot’ or ‘discourse’. Barry explains: “The ‘story’ is the actual sequence of events as they happen, whereas the ‘plot’ is those events as they are edited, ordered, packaged, and presented in what we recognise as a narrative.” He goes on to mention that ‘discourse’ is often preferred to ‘plot’ since “it isn’t just ‘plot’ in the narrow sense which is at issue, but style, viewpoint, pace, and so on, which is to say, the whole ‘packaging’ of the narrative which creates the overall effect” (223). Culler agrees: “[T]he discourse is the varied presentations of [the plot]” (85). In other words, the important issues at hand when doing a critical reading from a narratological perspective are the notions of plot, characters, focalization, narrator, how time is handled within the story (flashbacks, flash forwards), and framed narratives. These issues will all be discussed in following analysis.

2. Analysis: Original vs. Remake

The element of change that is most likely to strike the reader of the short story when watching the film is the “fleshing out”, as McMurtry puts is, of the characters. The two “versions” of Ennis, played by Heath Ledger, and Jack, played by Jake Gyllenhaal, stay very much the same in both short story and film. However, many other characters in the short story that are merely mentioned in passing, for example Ennis’ daughters, but also the two protagonists’ wives, play bigger parts and are developed further as characters in the film. Especially Jack’s wife Lureen and their family life are barely ever mentioned in the short story. In the film, on the other hand, Lureen’s character, played by Anne Hathaway, is developed into a more substantial part from the moment that she and Jack first meet, to Thanksgiving dinner with her side of the family, to the moment Ennis calls her on the phone to get information about Jack’s death.

Ennis' wife Alma, played by Michelle Williams, plays a fairly big part in the short story but her character is of even greater importance in the film. McMurtry and Ossana have used the heartache and devastation of a marriage in turmoil as a secondary theme of focus in their adaptation. In theory, it would have been possible to write a screenplay which would only focus on Jack and Ennis and the pain and heartache they go through and that way only expand on the stories of their lives, but the film audience is allowed to see the anguish Alma is going through when Michelle Williams acts out her feelings in front of the camera without saying much more than what is only implied in the short story.

There is a scene in the movie that has been added by the screenwriters (DVD Chapter 12) where Alma has seen Ennis and Jack kissing and has been left behind as they go out on their own. It is now the following morning when Ennis returns home only to pack and to tell Alma that he and Jack are going fishing. This is a scene that is focalized (see separate section on focalization) through Alma. The camera focuses on her as the scene begins; she is sitting by the kitchen table, looking incredibly tired, sad and worn out. In the rest of the scene she follows Ennis around the apartment as he packs his bag asking him questions whether Jack would not like a cup of coffee and what Ennis will do about his job while he is gone. It is a fairly short scene and there is not much dialogue, but McMurtry and Ossana have elaborated on what Alma's character might have been going through that was never made explicit in the short story: "ALMA sits at the kitchen table, dishevelled, hasn't slept all night. Nervous, a cup of coffee in front of her" and later "ALMA stands…confused yet relieved ENNIS came back home, struggles with complex feelings. Keeps big emotion inside. Tries to catch his eye" (McMurtry, Ossana 49). The screenwriters focus on Alma's character and use her pain as another example of a love and relationship that can never work. It is possible that they have chosen to do this in order to further strengthen the complications that Ennis and Jack are going through; their love is not only complicated for them but it also causes trouble for the

people close to them, which leads to even more issues speaking against them ever being able to have a trouble free life together.

The characters of Ennis' and Alma's two daughters have also been fleshed out in the film, especially the oldest daughter Alma Jr's part. Here one might almost ask if it is really only a matter of "fleshing out"; Alma Jr. is hardly mentioned in the short story but she is still a rather significant character in the motion picture and much more time is spent on her character than in the short story. It becomes obvious in two scenes that Alma Jr. is daddy's little girl; she is very much concerned with how he is doing and wants to come and live with him instead of with her mother. She is also very reluctant when she meets Ennis' girlfriend Cassie for the first time, but she catches herself when she is on the verge of being rude. The only concrete description the reader gets of Alma Jr. in the short story is when Ennis says that she is "a shy seventeen-year-old with his beanpole length" (274) while in the film she is included in scenes that have been added to the story by the screenwriters. The only description available for the screenwriters is that Alma Jr. is shy and tall which leaves a lot of room for expanding the character. How does one then expand on "shy", "tall" and "seventeen-year-old"? In the case of Alma Jr. it may very well be a case of inventing a character instead of "fleshing it out" since there is in a sense nothing more to work with than the fact that Ennis has a daughter named Alma Jr.

Characters: Static/Dynamic, Flat/Rounded

Maria Nikolajeva writes in her book *Barnbokens byggklossar* (*The Building Blocks of Children's Literature*) about characters and the dynamics of different types of characters. She refers to static and dynamic as well as flat and rounded characters. Characters that are dynamic go through some sort of change during the course of the story while static characters do not. She goes on to state that there are two types of dynamics, chronological and ethical. When a person goes through chronological change it simply means that he or she is

getting older, while ethical change means that the person goes through a relatively quick change often under extraordinary circumstances forcing the character to make an ethical or moral decision (109).

In both the short story and the film there are only dynamic characters since the plot takes place over a period of twenty years; they are all bound to change, more or less, as time passes. When comparing the characters of the short story to the characters of the film in a chronological sense, one comes to the conclusion that there is no real difference in how the characters act later in life. They develop very much in the same way in the film as they do in the original text. For example, Alma eventually decides to leave Ennis and Jack grows more and more impatient with Ennis in both short story and film. In this case the screenwriters have not done anything in particular to change the development of the individual characters.

Where differences are to be found, however, is in whether the characters are flat or rounded. Nikolajeva defines flat characters as people who are not fully developed in a text and more often than not only have one trait that is typical of their persona and sometimes not even one single trait (as with Ennis' oldest daughter in the short story). Rounded characters, on the other hand, have several personality traits and are more complex human beings (110). The wives are excellent examples of this phenomenon. To begin with, there is Lureen, who is mentioned only briefly on a couple of occasions in the short story, e.g. when Jack tells Ennis about what has taken place in his life during the last four years between their first and second meeting: "Tell you what, I married a cute little old Texas girl down in Childress—Lureen" (264). This is the only manner in which she is described and from those few references it is made clear that her father has a lot of money and that Lureen has a talent for "management and hard deals" (272). The only real contact the reader gets with Lureen's character in the short story is when Ennis receives word on Jack's death and calls her up on the phone. There is a dialogue between the two where Lureen does not say much more than is necessary for Ennis to form an idea of what happened to Jack. The conversation ends with the omniscient

narrator telling the reader “No doubt about it, she was polite but the little voice was cold as snow” (278).

In the film, the story of Lureen is a different one; her character is very “fleshed out”. The audience is taken along when Jack and Lureen first meet at the rodeo, something that is mentioned in the short story. It is also made clear that Lureen was very interested in Jack when they first met. They meet at a bar after the rodeo and after having thrown glances at each other for a while Lureen walks up to Jack and says “What are you waiting for, cowboy? A mating call?” (DVD Chapter 10). One peculiar aspect of Lureen is that as she grows older her hairstyle changes in a radical manner and slowly becomes more outrageous for every time the audience returns to her. This can either be seen as merely a chronological change but it can also be seen as having to do with the fact that she is a much more versatile character in the film and goes from being completely taken by storm by Jack to what can only be described as blasé and almost weary with life. This can be seen in the scene of the telephone conversation between her and Ennis; it is indeed “polite” but “cold as snow” on her part.

As mentioned above, the character Alma is also more rounded in the film. Apart from the already mentioned example of the scene which is focalized through her, there is also another scene where the audience sees the troubles in her life (DVD Chapter 10). Ennis arrives with their two daughters at the store where she works, only to leave them with her so that he can go to his job. Alma is clearly flustered and upset by the fact that her job is of less importance than Ennis’ according to him. This sort of focus upon what sort of everyday-life Alma lives is never featured in the short story.

Just because a character has more room in the motion picture than in the short story does not, however, mean that they automatically are dynamic and rounded. Ennis’ daughter Alma Jr. is included in several scenes in the movie but she is all the same depicted as “daddy’s little girl”; she does not show any particular characteristics to speak of apart from

the fact that she is very concerned with her father's well-being. She wants to make sure that he is a part of her life, for example when she asks Ennis if she can come and stay with him as well as in the final scene where she is very eager for him to come to her wedding.

Focalization

The term 'focalization' is important when discussing narratives because depending on whom the story is focalized through, the events taking place take on different meaning and importance. Culler defines focalization as "the consciousness or position through which events are brought into focus" (88). Barry also makes the distinction between 'external' and 'internal' focalization. 'External' focalization is when "the viewpoint is *outside* the character depicted", in other words, the reader only has access to what the character says and does, not what he is thinking or feeling. With 'internal' focalization, on the other hand, the focus lies on "what the characters *think* and *feel*" (232-233, author's italics).

In the short story of "Brokeback Mountain" there is, as already mentioned, an omniscient third person narrator. The narrator has access to all of the characters' thoughts and emotions, but when Jack's and Ennis' inner feelings are described it is done in a different, more personal manner than with, for example, Alma. Most of the short story is focalized through Ennis; it is his everyday-life that the reader has access to, his troubles with his wife and children, his sadness when he gets the postcard stamped "deceased." Therefore, it is common to come across sentences like "*yet he is suffused with a sense of pleasure because Jack Twist was in his dream*" (253, author's italics) or "Ennis [was] glad enough to be around stock again" (270); both of which are examples of internal focalization. Examples of this can be found with Jack as well: "[Jack was] trying to guess if it was a heart attack or the overflow of an incendiary rage" (276).

When Alma's thoughts are described it is in a manner that keeps the distance between the character and the reader: "Her resentment opened out a little every year: the

embrace she had glimpsed . . . his failure to look for a decent permanent job with the county or the power company, put her in a long, slow dive and when Alma Jr. was nine and Francine seven she said, what am I doin hangin around with him, divorced Ennis and married the Riverton grocer" (269-270). Alma's way of thinking about her marriage is described in a way that suggests that the goings-on are observable for another person present, it is not something that is only clear to Alma. This becomes evident when analyzing the verbs used: "she *said*, what am I doin" instead of "she *thought to herself*, what am I doin". When her thoughts are phrased like this it makes it a matter of external focalization; anyone present would be able to see her marriage eating away at her spirit.

In the movie, the matter of focalization works differently since different media use different tools to tell a story. In *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* Brian McFarlane states: "By exercising control over the mise-en-scène and soundtrack or through the manipulations of editing, the film-maker can *adapt* some of the functions of . . . narrational prose" (18, author's italics). This is applicable to the scene mentioned above where Alma is devastated after having realized that Ennis is more than friends with Jack Twist. Noteworthy, that scene is added to the story by McMurtry and Ossana, but it is still adapted from what the reader of the short story is told about Alma and her and Ennis' marriage. Therefore, it serves as a good example of focalization in the film since there is no dialogue or monologue when she is sitting at the kitchen table; she is just acting out what the reader can imagine she is going through by reading the short story even though there is no exact passage that relates to this scene. According to McFarlane, there is no need for a narrator or voiceover in this scene since the mise-en-scène and the film-maker take care of the matter of focalization and narration.

Because the film focalizes through and expands on the points of view of other characters than Ennis and Jack, the story becomes, in McMurtry's words, inevitably "fleshed out". The film features much more prominently themes of troubled marriages, a complicated

father-daughter relationship between Ennis and Alma Jr. as well as a rivalry relationship between Jack and his father-in-law. Everything is suggested in the short story but it is heightened and made more explicit through the shift from one medium to another. Culler argues that "plot can be preserved in translation from one language or one medium into another: a silent film or a comic strip can have the same plot as a short story" (84). This is evident when analyzing the plots of the two versions of *Brokeback Mountain*; the plots are without a doubt one and the same, the only difference being that the plot is more complex in the film than in the short story.

Narrator and Voiceover

There are many more or less elaborate descriptions of scenery and characters in the short story, all told by an omniscient third person narrator. The reader is told exactly what is going through the minds of the characters. For example, when Ennis and Alma are in their bedroom discussing whether to move into town or not and the mood becomes romantic and they begin to embrace and kiss each other, the narrator tells how Ennis "rolled her over [and] did quickly what she hated. They stayed in the little apartment which he favored because it could be left at any time" (262-263). These are thoughts and feelings that are never said aloud by the characters in the short story, it is only what the reader is told by the omniscient narrator. This is portrayed in the movie through body language and facial expressions. It is obvious by watching the look on Alma's face that she is clearly unhappy with the given situation without a voiceover telling us so. McFarlane comments on how the camera is used in a film to take on the tasks of a narrator:

> The camera in this sense becomes the narrator by, for instance, focusing on such aspects of mise-en-scène as the way actors look, move, gesture, or are costumed, or on the ways in which they are positioned in a scene or on how they are photographed: in these ways the camera may catch a 'truth' which comments on and qualifies what the characters actually say. (17)

The camera is also used to accentuate the actions, not only the implicit thoughts, of the characters. It can portray actions in any way the director chooses depending on the desired intent of the scene. For example, in the above mentioned scene with Ennis and Alma Ang Lee could easily have changed the mood of the scene if he had photographed the facial expressions of Ennis and Alma in a different manner. Depending on if both of their faces were in the frame, or perhaps just one of their faces was visible, if they were shot from such an angle or in such dim lighting where none of them would be visible and so on. The different combinations would lead to different results concerning the details of that particular moment.

Scenic descriptions are also included in the short story even though they are not always very elaborate: “The first snow came early, on August thirteenth, piling up a foot, but was followed by a quick melt” (8). It is put in very short and concise terms but still very much an important part of the short story in order to communicate the right atmosphere. As McMurtry pointed out in “From Script to Screen”, all elements are included in the screenplay. For example, on the very first page of the screenplay the reader gets a scenic description of the cattle truck coming down the highway which we later learn that Ennis has hitched a ride with (an element added by Ossana and McMurtry). The description of the highway and the truck is then followed by a passage that contains parts that have been copied verbatim from the short story “WE SEE the passenger: This is ENNIS DEL MAR: about twenty, but nonetheless compelling, not light or frivolous in disposition, appearance or manner, uncommonly quick reflexes—a high-school drop-out country boy with no prospects, *brought up to hard work and privation, rough-mannered, rough-spoken, inured to the stoic life”* (1 in screenplay, 254 in short story, my italics.). The part in italics is copied word for word from the short story, while the previous part has been adapted since it is put somewhat differently in the text: “Jack Twist . . . Ennis del Mar . . . both high school dropout country boys with no prospects.” This is the way the screenwriters have worked to include all parts and elements of

the short story into the film; they have taken bits and pieces, sometimes from quite different parts of the text, and adapted them in a way that fits their needs for their screenplay.

In the script everything from scenery to the way in which lines are meant to be delivered is explained thoroughly. Ossana and McMurtry have included exactly what they want for the viewers of the film to see. The audience will not hear the script being read to them verbatim; they will never hear the words "WE SEE the passenger: This is ENNIS DEL MAR…" and so forth, but they will still see this part of the story since Ang Lee follows the script, hence follows the short story, when making the film. The way to have stayed as true as possible to Proulx's writing would probably have been to use a voiceover as a narrator, who would reflect the omniscient narrator in the short story and would have told the audience about the details and thoughts of the characters, but judging from the final product, the screenwriters saw it more fit to do it this way. McFarlane argues that using a voiceover is not necessary for a screenplay: "In a sense, the film's story does not have to be told *because* it is presented" (29, author's italics). In other words, what the narrator in a novel or short story does is easily substituted by what the medium of film has at its disposal, i.e. camera, cast, the possibility of editing and so on.

Concerning whether or not to use voiceovers, Linda Hutcheon comments on the visual versus the aural in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*:

> When theorists talk of adaptation from print to performance media, the emphasis is usually on the visual, on the move from imagination to actual ocular perception. But the aural is just as important as the visual to this move . . . there are the separate soundtracks that permit elements like voice-overs, music, and noise to intermingle. (40-41)

In other words, one could say that what is being said or what sounds are being made, are just as important to the narration of the story as what is not said or what sounds are not being made. There will be more on the discussion of sounds and soundtracks below.

Handling of Time: Framed Narrative, Flashbacks and Flash Forwards

Another major change in the narrative form is the way the short story and the script begin and end. The short story has a type of framed narrative where we meet Ennis in the future; the introductory paragraph is set in italics and tells the reader how Ennis has just woken up and had a dream about Jack. When the non-italicized part of the text starts, the reader is transported back to the men's childhood years and told how they first met. When the entire story of "Brokeback Mountain" comes to an end, in an almost exclusively chronological order, the last two paragraphs of the text come as a natural summarization, but they also function as a look ahead on what Ennis' life will be like in the future. It is described how Jack began to appear in Ennis' dreams after Ennis went to see Jack's parents and how Ennis sometimes wakes up grief-stricken and sometimes with a sense of joy. Above all, it links back to a comment made by Ennis directed to Jack earlier in the short story.

In the screenplay on the other hand, there is no framed narrative. As mentioned above, the movie begins with a cattle truck coming down the road; Ennis' ride to go looking for work with "Farm and Ranch Employment." The final scene of the film is partly made up by the screenwriters: Ennis' oldest daughter has come to see her father and when she leaves Ennis realizes she has forgotten her sweater. He opens the door to see if she is still in sight but she is already long gone. He closes the door, folds the sweater and opens the closet door (this is all added by the screenwriters), where Ennis' and Jack's shirts are tucked into each other on the one and same hanger which is hung on a nail together with a postcard of Brokeback Mountain tacked to the door next to the shirts and lastly, Ennis says "Jack, I swear…". The last part has been adapted from the short story. Originally, there is a postcard and the hanger with the shirts on a nail, but the reader does not know for certain where Ennis chooses to hang the memories of Jack, but it does clearly say that Ennis says "Jack, I swear" also in the short story (283). Another detail that also has been changed or made explicit, depending on how

one chooses to define it, is that Jack's shirt is now tucked into Ennis'. Nothing is said about this in the short story but in the screenplay it is stated clearly: "[Ennis] has taken his shirt from inside of JACK'S, and has carefully tucked JACK'S shirt down inside his own" (97).

It is difficult to say why the scriptwriters chose to eliminate the framed narrative. If one would speculate, one might argue that it would be to overstate what the audience already knows on its own; that Ennis is heartbroken. Another explanation could be that they wanted to leave it more open-ended in order to encourage the audience to continue to think about the story as the film came to a close. Yet another explanation could be that it simply would not have worked very well cinematically and that their version opts for a stronger effect.

One matter in the handling of time has been kept the same in the film version, though. In the short story there is a section where Jack and Ennis have just had a big fight concerning the fact that they never get to be together long enough periods of time. This is quickly followed by a flashback of a memory in Jack's mind where he is hugged by Ennis in a way that evokes a true sense of comfort, peace and love: "the silent embrace [satisfied] some shared and sexless hunger" (276). The flashback is also present in the film. It cuts from the scene of anger, frustration and desperation to a point almost twenty years back in time when the two young men were completely at peace with each other, just enjoying the moment they found themselves in. This particular gesture is significant to the story of Jack and Ennis' fate because it shows the love and comfort they find in one another, and since it is such an important moment it is portrayed in very much the same way in the film as in the original work.

In cinema, there are ways of giving subtle hints of what is to come through the help of so called flash forwards. Linda Hutcheon states: [The] use of cinematic techniques points to one of the major advantages films have (over stage adaptations) of novels: the use of a multitrack medium that, with the aid of the mediating camera, can both direct and expand

the possibilities of perception" (43, my parentheses). In *Brokeback Mountain* this technique is used in the very beginning of the film when Jack and Ennis go to see their future employer Aguirre to find work. On the wall behind Aguirre's desk hangs a pair of binoculars, probably the same pair of binoculars that Aguirre later uses to look at Ennis and Jack from a distance and thereby is made aware of the two young men's sexual relationship. The binoculars could be seen as a hint at what is to come.

In the short story, the reader is never made aware of a pair of binoculars present in Aguirre's office, and is therefore, never made aware of the fact that they run a risk of being discovered. The fact that Aguirre catches them does not lead to much more than Jack being denied work the following summer. Nonetheless, it is still interesting to see how the medium of film can do things with a piece of writing that the text itself cannot accomplish in the same subtle manner.

Soundtrack

The mood in the short story is very sombre, and this atmosphere is portrayed to the reader through descriptions of scenery, characters and their thoughts. There is not much "real dialogue" and when the characters speak to each other, it is in a manner that relates to Annie Proulx's writing style. In her essay *Getting Movied* she states: "I write in a tight, compressed style that needs air and loosening to unfold into art. [Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana] had to invent, enlarge and imagine. It was, in a real way, a collaboration" (134).

This collaboration extends to the soundtrack for a film, in the sense that descriptions in *Brokeback Mountain* are not accounted for in an explicit manner in the movie since there are no voiceovers. Instead there has to be something else to help convey the ambience from the short story and this is where music and sound come in as powerful tools of narrative. Hutcheon states concerning adapting text into visual media that "when psychic reality is shown rather than told about, it has to be made manifest in the material realm to be

perceived by the audience" (14). Furthermore, she states: "Film is not supposed to be good at getting inside a character, for it can only show exteriors and never actually tell what is going on beneath the visible surface" (57-58). In other words, the soundtrack has to provide a sort of narration in order to convey moods and feelings where there is no human narrator.

The use of diegetic and extra-diegetic music, that is, music which can be heard by the characters (diegetic) and music that can only be heard by the audience (extra-diegetic), are both important ways of telling the original story and "psychic reality" in a new fashion, helping to enhance the ambience of the story and portray thoughts of characters that are not possible to make explicit without using voiceovers.

An example of diegetic music is when Jack has received word from Ennis that he and Alma have divorced, and Jack rushes to see Ennis in hopes of beginning their life together. However, when he arrives it becomes evident that he has misunderstood Ennis and that that there is still no hope of them ever being able to be together the way that Jack wishes for. Extremely disappointed, Jack leaves with his sight set on Mexico in search of another man to temporarily take Ennis' place. In the background both Jack and the audience can hear "A Love That Will Never Grow Old"[1] from the car stereo, a song written explicitly for the film by Gustavo Santaolalla and Bernie Taupin. In his essay "The Queerness of Country: *Brokeback's* Soundscape" Noah Tsika writes: "Scarcely audible, the song exists within the diegetic 'story world' of *Brokeback Mountain*, linked as it is to the visualized source of a car radio: a faint, vaguely sad anthem that accompanies Jack's tearful ride away from Ennis and to Mexico and other men." He continues: "The film itself is alert to the importance of music as not only meaningful commentary but also 'filler' – something that is per expectation for any mainstream narrative film . . . Santaolalla's Oscar-winning musical score . . . plays over high-angle shots of the mountain, as a bridge between certain scenes, and during moments of montage" (Stacy 164-166).

[1] See appendix at the end of the essay for the entire lyrics to "A Love That Will Never Grow Old".

Santaolalla's extra-diegetic guitar music is, like Tsika points out, often at its most prominent when Jack and Ennis are in the mountains and in montages of scenes, but also when they meet each other after long periods spent apart. The acoustic guitar only plays a few notes at a time, leaving room for long pauses in the music. It is very pensive, raw and full of emotion and therefore easy to link together with the characters of the movie as well as the scenery, telling and enhancing a story where there is no narrator.

Often Ang Lee lets scenery and weather do the talking without including music of any sort, an example of this is when Alma and Ennis still live outside of town and Alma is outside hanging laundry. The wind is wailing around the small house and hair is blowing in Alma's face. The sounds of the cold and harsh wind make it very clear that this is not a welcoming landscape to live in. Later on Alma's character makes this fact completely clear when asking Ennis if they should not move into town where it is not so lonely.

On another instance, on the other hand, McMurtry and Ossana have chosen to change the setting of a particular scene that otherwise would have been more dramatic if filmed the way it is written in the short story. In Proulx's text it says explicitly that the afternoon that Jack comes to visit Ennis for the first time that thunder is rumbling outside, but in the movie there is neither rain nor thunder. For some reason McMurtry and Ossana chose to make this scene less dramatic, perhaps in order for it to be more about the longing and romance that Jack and Ennis have felt. All of this is discreetly accompanied by Santaolalla's score.

3. Discussion: Changes Made

When studying a work which originally is in print and comparing it to its adaptation counterpart in another medium, in this case film, it becomes evident that exactly everything cannot stay the same. A shift in medium requires changes to be made in the text

that is going to be adapted. In the case of *Brokeback Mountain* something that is clearly in need of change is the length of the manuscript. In order for it to become a full feature length film elements have to be added. McMurtry and Ossana have done so by expanding the characters and making the plot more complex than in the short story. In Proulx's text it is Ennis' and Jack's relationship that is in focus; everything going on around them is of lesser importance. In the film on the other hand, Ennis' and Jack's families are also included in the main storyline; the characters of Alma and Lureen have more depth to them and the audience shares their fates even though the fate of Ennis and Jack is still in focus.

There are of course also logical explanations why the film is not just a word for word version of the short story; it simply would not make for very good cinema. From a narratological perspective, the structure of a film is completely different from the structure of a short story or novel. Things that are fundamental in prose, above all descriptions of scenery and characters, cannot be conveyed in the same way in a visual medium, at least not without the use of a voiceover, and even then it is questionable whether a text could be directly "translated" into a film in a successful way.

One also has to keep in mind that it is not the screenwriters who have the final say in what the completed product should look like. No matter how similar their screenplay is compared to the original, there are other voices involved in putting their imprint on the finished work, for example producers, editors and the director. The director above all, who moulds the script in the way he or she sees most suitable, has a large say in the final outcome. This leads to the fact that the script takes even further steps away from the original source.

4. Summary and Conclusion

As discussed in the section above, it is obvious that changes have been made. Elements have both been added as well as subtracted even though the parts subtracted do not

come remotely close to the amount that has been added. However, McMurtry is exaggerating somewhat when he says that every part of the short story is used somewhere in the screenplay. There is one passage towards the end of the short story that has no counterpart in the screenplay, namely the one about how Jack had trouble making his way to the bathroom in time when he was little and what his father did in order to punish him (280). When reading the short story for the first time I was somewhat confused about this passage because to me it breaks up the flow of the story, it is almost as if it is taken out of the blue and the matter is left behind just as suddenly. Because of that fact it is understandable that it was decided not to include this passage in the adaptation.

Depending on how one chooses to look upon things, some may say that there is still many components missing since not every sentence in Proulx's text is uttered in the film version. Descriptions of scenery and characters are, as mentioned before, not accounted for by a voiceover in the film, but in many ways this is a matter of transformation rather than subtraction since a different type of medium works differently to tell a story. For example, the camera conveys the text's scenic descriptions through its photography; sounds and visual effects help tell the story of a harsh and unwelcoming or a serene and beautiful landscape depending on the situation, and the actors portray and convey personality traits and emotions through their acting performances. The shift in media inevitably leads to a change in discourse.

If an audience who had never read the short story would attempt to describe and summarize what they saw in the film, they would not necessarily use the same adjectives as Annie Proulx, but surely they would use words that are synonymous with hers. In other words, what McMurtry and Ossana saw as most important when writing their adaptation was that they would stay as true as possible to the core of the original and not intrude on the storyline of *Brokeback Mountain*. All significant moments are kept intact, to mention a few

there are Jack's and Ennis' first meeting, their first sexual experience together as well as their first separation to the fights they have and finally Jack's death.

However, there was one change of focus that Annie Proulx had difficulty coming to terms with that she discusses in her own essay. According to her, the most pivotal moment in the short story is the motel scene where Jack and Ennis meet again after four years apart. Ang Lee on the other hand argued that (in Proulx's words) "the emotional surge contained in that scene would be better shifted to a later point and melded with the men's painful last meeting". Proulx comments on Lee's choice: "I didn't understand this until I saw the film . . . and recognized the power of this timing." She even went so far as to write to Lee pleading that he would concentrate on the motel scene but realized that the story was no longer in her hands (136). In other words, Lee followed through on his idea where the climactic scene is when Ennis and Jack see each other for the very last time and are about to part after having spent some time in the Wyoming Mountains. As a result from this change, the pivotal moment in the film comes closer to the end than its counterpart in the short story. As discussed earlier, the narratology of a short story and a film differ from one another and therefore, issues concerning timing differ. That is why this change had to be made; in a film the climax usually appears close to the end and the shift in media requires this change in order for the movie to function better cinematically. In the end, Annie Proulx agreed with Ang Lee's choice and I believe that the audience also appreciates the change in focus.

One can always debate if the original invariably outshines any remake, or whether an original piece can benefit from being remade into a new medium, or even if the two works should be seen as totally separate not to be compared at all. In the matter of *Brokeback Mountain* it is clear that all authors have seen it as a collaboration even though the works stand on their own. As quoted earlier, Proulx literally calls it "a collaboration" and Ossana comments: "We saw our script as a long, honest and credible extension of Annie's writing, her dialogue, sense of time, place and landscape, but also remained open to scene and

dialogue adjustments if they served the story and the characters" (Ossana 148-149). McMurtry also comments on the intention of showing as much allegiance to the original as possible: "[W]e did our level best to follow the clear track of the story, augmenting and amplifying, adding texture and substance where necessary" (McMurtry 140). No matter what one's view on adaptations is, the research done for this study undoubtedly shows that "Brokeback Mountain" and *Brokeback Mountain* walk faithfully hand in hand.

Works cited

Primary sources

Proulx, Annie. *Close Range: Wyoming Stories.* New York: Scribner, 1999.

Proulx, Annie, Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. *Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay*. New York: Scribner, 2005.

Brokeback Mountain. Dir. Ang Lee. Focus Features, 2005.

Secondary sources

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University. Press, 2000.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

McMurtry, Larry. "Adapting Brokeback Mountain." *Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay.* New York: Scribner, 2005. 139-142.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Barnbokens byggklossar* [*The Building Blocks of Children's Literature*]. 2nd ed. Sverige [Sweden]: Studentlitteratur, 2004.

Ossana, Diana. "Climbing Brokeback Mountain." *Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay.* New York: Scribner, 2005. 143-151.

Proulx, Annie. "Getting Movied." *Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay.* New York: Scribner, 2005. 129-138.

Stacy, Jim,ed. *Reading Brokeback Mountain: Essays on the Story and the Film.*

Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2007.

“Emmylou Harris - A Love That Will Never Grow Old”. **www.seeklyrics.com**. 2002-2008. Date of Access: 12 May 2008. <http://www.seeklyrics.com/lyrics/Emmylou-Harris/A-Love-That-Will-Never-Grow-Old.html>

Appendix

Lyrics for “A Love That Will Never Grow Old”
Written by Gustavo Santaolalla and Bernie Taupin
Performed by Emmylou Harris

Go to sleep, may your sweet dreams come true
Just lay back in my arms for one more night
I've this crazy old notion that calls me sometimes
Saying this one's the love of our lives.

Refrain:
Cause I know a love that will never grow old
And I know a love that will never grow old.

When you wake up the world may have changed
But trust in me, I'll never falter or fail
Just the smile in your eyes, it can light up the night,
And your laughter's like wind in my sails.

(Refrain)

Lean on me, let our hearts beat in time,
Feel strength from the hands that have held you so long.
Who cares where we go on this rutted old road
In a world that may say that we're wrong.

(Refrain)