

REPRESSION, SILENCE, AND CINEMATIC LANGUAGE:  
EASTERN SENSIBILITY IN VISUALIZING *BROKEBACK  
MOUNTAIN*

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*Abstract: From Brokeback Mountain to Life of Pi, the Taiwan-born film director, Ang Lee, has won two Oscars for the Best Director. Both films are set in cultural contexts where Lee did not grow up, and yet both have drawn global audiences and received unanimous praise from critics. This article examines Ang Lee's cinematic technique communicated with his Eastern sensibilities in Brokeback Mountain. In applying his cinematic language, he not only shows loyalty to the mood and content of the original short story, but also re-creates much visual detail. His visual additions serve to redeem what in writing is not replicable in film, such as psychological description, and to enrich the story to fill the range of a full-length feature film.*

So much has been written about Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain*. The film has received unanimous acclamation from global audiences, film critics and LGBT communities. It was also one of the biggest winners at the 78<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards, crowning Lee the Best Director. It has been regarded as an "issue film that invites nothing but pure escapism" (Herring, 2007, 94), as well as "a love story about two guys who happen to be gay" (McBride, 2007, 96). The financial success of the film is equally remarkable. Grundmann has noted, "Made and marketed for \$14 million (not a single one of which, as Variety has noted, went to TV advertising), its initial badge was strictly art house. But when the opening weekend yielded a conspicuous eighth best per-screen average in history, even seasoned industry analysts were taken by surprise" (2006, 50-52). The success is obvious, and yet not so much scholarship has been done to examine the immense success of this film. Some critic ascribes the financial success of the film to the "sacrifice of countercultural subversiveness" to achieve the inoffensiveness of the subject matter (Osterweil, 2007, 42). In my view, the success lies in the Eastern sensibilities in Ang Lee's cinematic language entailed to highlight the universality of a cowboy love story.

We will first look at what makes a good film and what is the definition of a good film. Arguably, despite individual differences of taste and inter-subjective reception of a particular film within an audience, the universality of world's most

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acclaimed films is always characterized by the nature of a good story well told. Story-telling demands a great deal of technique, and it is even more demanding to tell a story in film that can be fully understood by audiences regardless of their cultural identities and the language barrier. It is noticeable that Ang Lee's directorial work is well received both in the West and Asia, no matter if it is situated in American West (*Brokeback Mountain*) or China's Qing dynasty (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*). In brief, his use of the nuanced visual composition, constructed on a sense of the commonality of human nature, draws a universal attitude towards it. To achieve the universality, his cinematic language transcends not only geographical differences, but also sexuality differences. As D. A. Miller has suggested, Ang Lee's cinematic technique creates a "celluloid closet," drawing mainstream audiences to the universality of love while allowing them to forget the sexual politics and the homosexual content of the romance between two men (2007, 52).

The immense success of *Brokeback Mountain* has, therefore, reinforced my interest in examining Ang Lee's cinematic language. I have particularly examined reviews and critiques on Ang Lee's family background and his directorial style in an attempt to find out if I have any consensus of opinions with other critics. It is also intriguing that *Brokeback Mountain* is perceived as both authentically American Western and yet different from most other Westerns, having incorporated Chinese melodramatic elements (Berry, 2007, 32-37). Furthermore, even though *Brokeback Mountain* has been called by some a "gay cowboy movie," or "a gay watershed" (Burr, 2006, 69), it is also widely acknowledged by the mainstream, non-homosexual audiences. In my view, the fact that *Brokeback Mountain* has transcended cultural, geographical, gender and sexuality boundaries is evidence that Ang Lee's work has earned a global reception in a "real" sense, not through the influx of international capital, or assembling international cast in consideration of transnational box office income, or switching between locations in various countries as often seen in a time-travel film. His celebrated global reception is due to his well-schemed cinematic language that links the audience with the characters on the large screen, making clear a theme that otherwise would be lost to cultural and language barriers. It is a language that does not need subtitles, or to be dubbed, but a language that is shared and received by all audiences. Ang Lee's multicultural background has contributed to the achievement of that goal. It is hard to identify Ang Lee as a film director geographically. He himself is also confused by his identity, as he remarks, "I have always had identity problems. People like me, second-generation mainlanders from Taiwan, are a rare breed. They last only about two generations and account for a very small proportion of people among Chinese...And in Taiwan there are all kinds of local groups who have different cultural affiliations...and many of us came from Taiwan to the States, where we are foreigners. So all our lives we have identity problems" (332, Berry). Born in Taiwan to parents who migrated from Mainland China, he has spent most of his adult life in the U.S., where he not only

received his degree in film production, but conceived ideas and fragments for his early films on East-and-West interaction and conflicts and family dynamics such as *Pushing Hands* (1992), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Women* (1994). He says, “For me, all of my first three movies...are actually a trilogy about my father...and the need for the releasing of the Chinese tradition, so to speak...The thing that used to be [the backbone of Chinese society] and provide us security is now drifting away” (Dilley, 2007, 64). Since *The Wedding Banquet*, he has walked in long strides in his film career, gradually becoming an internationally acclaimed director, by directing one British and two Hollywood masterpieces: *Sense of Sensibility* (1995), *The Ice Storm* (1997), *Ride with the Devil* (1999). Following three contracted film projects, in 2000, he returned to the Chinese subject matter, directing *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, which won the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for Best Director. It was *Brokeback Mountain* in 2005 that finally brought him the Academy Award for Best Director. From family melodrama, to Jane Austen, to the Qing dynasty of China, and the American West, his transformation is underlined by a notable negotiation between audiences and a remarkable ability in handling such diversity of subject matters with thought and artifice. He is the epitome of globalization with a globalized audience, with his work facilitating our perception of globalization on film and globalization in the larger life.

From *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) to *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and to *Lust, Caution* (2007), Ang Lee’s work is consistent if they are viewed in a sequence. As a “queer” film, *The Wedding Banquet*, revolving around family ethics featuring a father figure, has stereotypical portrayal of gay people that reflects the early stage of Ang Lee’s reading of the complexity of homosexuality. *Brokeback Mountain*, however, has been regarded as a mainstream classic as above mentioned even though it has a homosexual subject matter, nevertheless allowing Ang Lee to become an internationally acclaimed film director. In critiquing *The Wedding Banquet* and some of Lee’s other Chinese themed films, Dennis Lo argues, “[T]he underlying themes and stylistic tropes that extend through his works are emphatically ‘Asian American’” (2008). During the 12 years’ time span between *The Wedding Banquet* and *Brokeback Mountain*, Ang Lee seems to have made a great leap forward in working his favorite film genre and the subject matter. He has proved that he cannot only deal with Chinese-ness in his film, but also a Western subject matter with his invisible Chinese-ness. In brief, he embodies his Chinese sensibilities deeply rooted in his hybrid identities in *Brokeback Mountain*.

Ang Lee says to Hong Kong media, “Everyone has *Brokeback Mountain* in mind” (2006). In my view, the *Brokeback Mountain* in his mind is symbolic of a transgressive potential, a deviant tendency against social norms and sexual taboos, and a desire to depart from conformity to mainstream society in pursuit of transgressive pleasures. By the time he shot *Brokeback Mountain*, Ang Lee seems to have developed a deepened understanding of the complexity of sexualities.

*Brokeback Mountain* represents Ang Lee's new path in exploring the "Brokeback Mountain" in everyone's mind. Two years later, his *Lust, Caution*, a Chinese espionage thriller film also adapted from a short story, earned him new awards or nominations at such prestigious international film festivals as Venice International Film Festival and Golden Global Awards. *Brokeback Mountain* and *Lust, Caution* are described by Ang Lee himself as visions of "heaven and hell," albeit both depicting a forbidden love, *Brokeback Mountain* serves as heaven for two cowboys and bears witness of their eternal love, *Lust, Caution* traps the woman with an assassination mission into a momentary lustful love that leads her to hell. A significant similarity between these two masterpieces is marked by his exquisite use of cinematic technique and his keen sensibilities.

Although *The Wedding Banquet*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *Lust, Caution*, as Ang Lee's self-oriented directorial work, have never been officially announced as Ang Lee's trilogy, there appears to be a consistence if they are viewed in a sequence, only the cinematic skill being matured and consummated. Overall, it is his invisible Asianness (Lo, 2008) that constitutes the consistency.

The nature of the story of *Brokeback Mountain* sets the reticent tone that perfectly needs Ang Lee's exquisite cinematic language. Ang Lee himself is a quiet man, whose humility and reticence in personal life have been noted by media (Anthony, 2003). He states that his father was "a man of few words," too (2003), and the father figure that shaped his own character has been presented consistently in his early films with Chinese concerns. As "emotional repression" is one common theme in Lee's work, the fact that Lee has been raised in his traditional Chinese family "tense with unexpressed thoughts and feelings" makes him "an expert on the subject" (2003). Silence has played an important role in shaping his mentality. In *Articulate Silences*, the quiet Asians are seen as "inscrutable," and the quietness is "associated with the feminine" (Cheung, 1993, 2). Silence may also be caused by prohibition (3), and also "carries other functions and meanings" (3). It may be added that silence has contributed to Ang Lee's sensibilities in creating his cinematic language. Notably, the emotional repression in Ang Lee has reached to its peak in filming *Brokeback Mountain*, as well as the later *Lust, Caution*, unfolding more of his potential of using his masterly cinematic language set with a silent tone.

The story takes place in Signal, Wyoming, where Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) meet each other when getting summer jobs as sheepherders on Brokeback Mountain. Jack is extroverted, loquacious and outgoing, while Ennis is introverted, quiet and reserved. Life in the mountains is dull, with barely other human beings but the two of them and their sheep. Who knows what is going to happen between them if they constitute each other's only company? One night, Ennis sleeps by the campfire at the campsite while Jack sleeps in the tent. Seeing Ennis trembling in the freezing cold, Jack invites him to sleep in the tent. When one's body snuggles and nestles against the heat of the other's, the physical closeness ignites cardinal sparks between the two young

men. Even though they do not talk about it the next morning, they cannot stop doing it. While continuing to have sex here and there, their love also deepens, though neither of them identifies himself as queer. When the summer jobs are done, they part. Ennis marries long-time girlfriend Alma while Jack marries Lureen, a Texas cowgirl from a wealthy family.

Four years have passed now. Jack visits Ennis, their passion exploding again. While Jack wishes to make a life with Ennis, Ennis feels fearful about the risk. They end up getting together once in a while on the Brokeback Mountain, lying to their wives that they are going on fishing trips. One day, upon hearing Ennis's divorce, Jack is exhilarated, driving to see Ennis in hopes to be together for the rest of their life, but again, his proposal is turned down by Ennis. On Brokeback Mountain, they have an argument: while Jack blames Ennis for the frustration at seeing him infrequently, Ennis blames Jack for causing his emotional conflicts.

Some more time has passed by. Ennis receives a returned postcard that he had sent to Jack, stamped "Deceased." He phones Lureen. She tells him that Jack died of a tire explosion. Lureen also tells Ennis that Jack wanted to have his ashes scattered on Brokeback Mountain, but she doesn't know where it is. Ennis visits Jack's parents, offering to take Jack's ashes but is refused by Jack's father. In Jack's childhood bedroom, Ennis finds his lost shirt inside of Jack's, hanging in the closet. Jack's mother allows him to keep the shirts.

Annie Proulx, the author of the original story, reportedly showed satisfaction for Ang Lee's adaptation after watching the film. Fundamentally, in the film Ang Lee does not seem to have changed much, except that the two actors, Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal, are apparently more physically attractive than what Annie Proulx describes in the original short story. Ang Lee keeps the codes coined by Proulx, including the names of the two protagonists. Twist, meaning not straight, implies that Jack Twist is more on the homosexual side. Ennis in Irish is an island, while del mar means "of the sea," so the name of Ennis Del Mar, meaning "island of the sea," may indicate his loneliness, isolation and inarticulateness.

Ang Lee's subtle cinematic language serves three categories in the film. Firstly, it authentically visualizes the landscape as described in the original story. The difference is that Anne Proulx uses description in words conflated with personal commentary while Ang Lee uses a cinematic language based on shots that he gives a meaning to. In doing so, he reproduces beautiful color-and-texture compositions of the wilderness and emptiness of the Brokeback Mountain as described in the original short story, the visuals of the sheep, the campsite, the fire, the blue sky and clouds, and the snow and hailstones. The first shot in the film is a long shot of a pick-up truck running along a road in Wyoming, headlights on in the predawn dark, with no other vehicles running on the road, creating a feel of loneliness and bleakness. And yet the colors are beautifully composed in the long, fluid shot: Underneath a ribbon of dim orange on top pervading the dawning sky are shades of lush greens. The truck, driven by Jack

Twist, is running from left to right in a gigantic field, like a bright dot, with the headlights on, floating in the endless dark. The slow guitar music contributes to the desolate tone. It is not even music; it rather sounds like random plucking of strings, and the emptiness in between the notes seems like a helpless sign. All in all, the opening shot establishes the mood of the entire film, foreshadowing the tragic, frustrating and unfulfilling ending of the story. This fine-tuned poetic melancholy is also typical in his *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a representative feature of the Chinese humanistic spirit, which appeals to Western audiences as well.

Secondly, Ang Lee masterly uses well-designed cinematic language to mouth the untold, the inarticulate, and the silent dynamics of and between the characters. In the introductory scene where the two protagonists appear and meet each other while waiting for Joe Aguirre to look for work, Ang Lee gives a close up shot to Jack Twist, who observes Ennis in the rear window of the truck. Ennis, head down, silent and motionless, does not seem to have noticed Jack's presence. The shot of Jack's gaze lasts for quite a few seconds, not only indicating that the story will be taking place between them but also establishes the relational dynamics between the two protagonists. This is even more evident in the next scene where after leaving Joe Aguirre's office, in a wide shot of the ghost town of Signal, Jack walks with long strides, ahead of Ennis, head up, while Ennis follows, head down. This shot conveys that Jack is the one that takes the initiative in their interaction, as contrasted with Ennis's passive and subdued nature. The reticent tone set in meticulous shots is evident that Ang Lee's sensibilities often seen in his Chinese-themed films also work well in an American Western.

The ghost town of Signal now has been replaced by the sheepherding scene in the lush mountains where the blue sky, rolling clouds, shades of greens, and the vast mobile picture of thousands of wriggling sheep, create a feel of liveliness and colorfulness. The guitar music cheers up, while Jack and Ennis seem to be more relaxed and comfortable with each other, riding their horses, following the sheep through forest and across streams, as presented in a fluid and naturally transitioned montage. From the stagnant, deadly Signal to the Brokeback Mountain, Ang Lee is accentuating to the audience the significance of the Brokeback Mountain, where the two protagonists find their escape from reality and enjoy a forbidden love in their own Eden. It is a place that does not need the spoken language; it articulates everything in the visual language, a language of subtleties, fluidity and honesty, as it conceals nothing to the audience.

The Eden of Brokeback Mountain is constituted with the public and private spheres. The mountains may be perceived as the public sphere, where the two sheepherders pass time looking after the sheep without confronting each other with fear of intimacy, but at nights their campsite becomes their private sphere that renders their proximity inevitable, and, once the potential sparks are fueled, a homoerotic libido will erupt.

The day after Jack and Ennis had sex in the tent, they don't talk about what has happened between them. The feelings are intricately entangled and any word is extra. For this extended wordless part of the story, Ang Lee particularly constructs a visual composition of Jack and Ennis on a hillside looking into the tranquil distance, where Ennis stands first, while Jack casually lies on the grass, creating a meaningful right angle that reveals the state of mind of each person: One seems stiff, inhibited and discomfort about the situation and the other more relaxed, more uninhibited and more comfortable.

Another two scenes featuring Jack and Ennis on the Brokeback Mountain that consists of well designed shots are the scenes of their return to the Brokeback Mountain for their fishing trips, one right after their reunion after four years of no contact, and the other perhaps the last retreat prior to Jack's death. Unlike what we most likely see in a scene similar to this in other films using a master shot, a medium two shot, an over-shoulder shot favoring A and an over-shoulder shot favoring B, Ang Lee uses meticulous multiple shots and camera angles to shoot the camp fire scene where Jack and Ennis discuss the possibility of starting a life together, with Jack expressing his frustration at the infrequency of their get-together and Ennis recalling his childhood memory of a man who died of gay bash. We see a full moon in the sky overlooking the two of them, a master shot of them sitting by the camp fire and the stream to locate the scene geographically, and then at least a few medium close up shots and close up shots of each person, dirty shots favoring one while part of the other in soft focus, along with a medium two shot showing the proximity of them. Again, we see Ang Lee's masterly grasp of Chinese poetic melancholy. There is also Ennis's memory scene inserted in the middle. Multiple camera set-ups are also used as we see in different frames the switch from Jack's profile to his front and back and forth, and switch from Ennis left profile to his right. Ang Lee's effort in shooting this scene with so much detail and consideration signifies the importance of this scene positioned in the whole story as it is the beat of the plot that links the heavenly reunion with the purgatory of despair, frustration and continued loneliness and isolation. The last Brokeback Mountain retreat scene, albeit as romantic as before, ends up with an argument between Jack and Ennis over Ennis's inability to make a committed life together. If Jack is still hopeful in the first Brokeback Mountain retreat scene, this time he is in despair, mouthing, "I wish I knew how to quit you." Alongside a panoramic view of a tranquil lake with Jack standing in front of it, Ang Lee even uses a dolly shot shooting the two of them, with Jack in soft focus in the forefront with his back towards Ennis and Ennis in the background, trying to defend himself. It is an interesting way of blocking and the shot works well. The camera moves slowly and steadily from Jack's right side to his left side. While mobilizing Jack's upper body in the frame, the shot keeps Ennis still in the frame, showcasing the contrasted two different inner worlds and the psychological struggles in each.

Thirdly, as above-mentioned, Ang Lee has also added a great number of visuals that are not in the original short story, but they work fairly well in the film.

One example is the tent scene after Jack and Ennis had crossed their line. In the scene, first of all, we see Jack lying in the tent, his upper body naked, and then Ennis walks into it slowly from the campfire. Jack sits up, leans forward, trying to kiss Ennis. Ennis resists it, shifts away from it, but keeps on having sex, with Jack's encouraging response. He seems to feel guilty, and yet cannot stop it. This re-created visual detail makes a great deal of sense: For a deeply homophobic and masculine man like Ennis, especially in that pre-Stonewall era in America's Middle West, kissing is perhaps a more intimate act than penetrative sex, for kissing involves much emotional investment but sex may just be for emergency purposes, a "one-shot thing" as Jack puts it. Further, kissing between men literally threatens a man's masculinity, while penetrative sex does not as it is a form of conquest and dominance. In fact, neither Jack nor Ennis is effeminate or falls into the stereotypical imagery of homosexual men. Ang Lee's addition particularly exemplifies a deepened understanding of the sexualities in relation to one's homoerotic desires and one's gendered mannerism. It subverts the traditional binary sexuality mode by manifesting the flexibility, complexity and fluidity of one's sexuality. It also interrogates the stereotypically effeminate mannerism of those who practice homosexual acts. This scene along with the entire film conveys the secret where Jack and Ennis can be positioned in the spectrum of sexualities: While obviously Jack is more on the homosexual side whose sexuality is more fixed and consistent than Ennis, Ennis seems to be simply heteroflexible. This spectrum challenges Western black or white ideological mode and distinct classification of sexualities. Like Ennis himself claims in the original short story, he loves having sex with women and has dated a woman since divorce, but only doing it with Jack is most gratifying. He even masturbates thinking about him. Apparently, he loves Jack more for who he is than for him being a man, and love for him has transcended gender, social and cultural norms.

About their passionate indulgence in homoeroticism while refusing to identify as queer, Anne Proulx writes in the original short story as such:

As it did go. They never talked about the sex, let it happen, at first only in the tent at night, then in the full daylight with the hot sun striking down, and at evening in the fire glow, quick, rough, laughing and snorting, no lack of noises, but saying not a goddam word except once Ennis said, "I'm not no queer," and Jack jumped in with "Me neither. A one-shot thing. Nobody's business but ours" (Proulx, 1997).

To reproduce this part of description, Ang Lee does not use montage that normally would combine a series of shots of Jack and Ennis having sex at different times of the day or in different places, which may undermine the weight and profundity of the theme. Instead, he re-creates a scene where in a wide shot Jack and Ennis play naughtily with each other, both semi-naked, and end up rolling on the ground, kissing and making love. This, however, has been caught by Joe Aguirre from afar through a telescope. Although Anne Proulx writes that



Joe Aguirre watches them having sex through a telescope, Ang Lee has added a meaningful visual detail, which is Ennis takes the initiative by kissing Jack in the playful scene. This indicates that Ennis has overcome his sense of guilt to some extent and come to fully enjoy a secret love on the Brokeback Mountain.

Among other visual additions that Ang Lee has created, the throw-and-miscatch of the keys between Jack and his father-in-law reveals to the audience a communicational dysfunction between them, which is even upgraded in the later Thanksgiving scene, where Jack is enraged at his father-in-law over turning on or off the TV set for Jack's son. Besides, the shirts in the final trailer scene are given more thought than the original short story to generate a powerful moment. We may remember the scene where Ennis visits Jack's parents after Jack's death. Jack's mother lets him come into Jack's childhood bedroom, where Ennis finds out two shirts hanging in the closet, with Ennis's shirt tucked inside of Jack's. This is exactly written in the original short story:

The shirt seemed heavy until he saw there was another shirt inside it, the sleeves carefully worked down inside Jack's sleeves. It was his own plaid shirt, lost, he'd thought, long ago in some damn laundry, his dirty shirt, the pocket ripped, buttons missing, stolen by Jack and hidden here inside Jack's own shirt, the pair like two skins, one inside the other, two in one. He pressed his face into the fabric and breathed in slowly through his mouth and nose, hoping for the faintest smoke and mountain sage and salty sweet stink of Jack, but there was no real scent, only the memory of it, the imagined power of Brokeback Mountain of which nothing was left but what he held in his hands (281).

This is a powerful image that has articulated what is concealed underneath in a forbidden love, a love that is not allowed to manifest in a mainstream, normative manner. Two shirts, Ennis's inside of Jack's, as if skin to skin and "two in one," symbolize the unity of two souls, inseparable and eternal, as well as conveys a secret yearning in Jack to cherish Ennis forever deep inside of him. In the film, Ang Lee does not only visualize the descriptive scene loyally, but also re-creates a scene featuring the two shirts that is fairly different from the original short story. The original short story ends up with Ennis searching for a Brokeback Mountain postcard in a gift shop. The postcard arrives, he nails it in his trailer, hangs the two shirts right below, watching them, and murmuring, "Jack, I swear." In the film, towards the end the 19-year-old Alma Jr. (Kate Mara) comes to her father Ennis's trailer, inviting him to her wedding. Ennis asks her if her fiancé loves her, and she says yes. After Alma leaves, Ennis turns to his closet. On the back of the closet door we see two shirts hanging on a nail, with a postcard of Brokeback Mountain above them. It is Jack's shirt inside of Ennis's now, reminding us that in the earlier scene Ennis's shirt inside of Jack's. Fastening the top button of Jack's shirt, Ennis utters, his eyes being wet by tears, "Jack, I swear..." He also straightens the Brokeback Mountain postcard, and then closes the closet door and walks away. This scene not only echoes the earlier scene where Ennis finds out

the two shirts in Jack's childhood bedroom, but once again strengthens our belief in their long cherished love for each other, a love that is linked with the Brokeback Mountain and now hidden deep in a closet, and a love where now the living cherishes and protects the dead, still skin to skin and "two in one." Hence, the Brokeback Mountain has become a remote memory that will never fade away; a surreal place where the lovers once made their home, open and yet private, spatial and yet liminal, while now Ennis is left alone in his tiny and drab trailer, spending the rest of his life finding solace in the postcard and the shirts below. Ennis Del Mar, island of the sea, seems to have been destined to be lonely, isolated and alienated. This subtle, indirect way of showing lasting love and prolonged frustration in film is uncommon in American Westerns, but has been a common technique in classical Chinese literature and films. In general, Chinese sensibilities stem from the introverted nature of the people and the sophistication of their culture and historical heritage, while there is a lack of subtlety and nuances in "Western interpretative tools" (Hall and Ames, 1995, 2). The rationale given by Hall and Ames is that the dominant features of Western culture, "expressed in the form of broad doctrinal traditions which contextualize the most important meanings...exist alongside an inexhaustibly complex set of alternative ideas and practices the attenuation of which is, though partly the result of limitations of creativity and imagination, largely a function of the rise to dominance of an objectivist bias which leads us, above all, to search out the 'truth of the matter'" (2). The truth-seeking, especially in post-Enlightenment era, characterizes Western mentality, while there is always a blurring line between the truth and non-truth in Eastern mentality. Therefore, in East Asian cultures, exists an inexhaustibly complex of subtleties, nuance and meta-message, for which "anticipating" is needed.

Ang Lee's Chinese sensibilities fit into the story of a reticent forbidden love. He employs the subtle and nuanced visuals to empower the theme, speaking louder than any words, and articulating inaudibly yet without attenuating any message. Indeed, there are numerous wordless scenes in *Brokeback Mountain*, and Ang Lee's silent and yet rich cinematic language works well. Silence has been associated with sensibilities in East Asian cultures. As J. Vernon Jensen has put it, quoted in *Articulate Silences*, "Silence can communicate scorn, hostility, coldness, defiance, sternness, and hate; but it can also communicate respect, kindness, and acceptance" (Cheung, 2). Silence has split people into "Orientals and Westerners" (16). Silence has inspired Ang Lee's creativity in speaking out his diverse cinematic language as described above. Significantly, the fact that Ang Lee underplays the gayness but reinforces the universality of love using his "silent" cinematic technique allows spectators from all backgrounds to relate to it.

In conclusion, Ang Lee's successful film adaptation of *Brokeback Mountain* has appealed to a globalized audience largely due to his masterly cinematic language. In applying his cinematic language, he not only shows the reproductional loyalty to the mood and content of the original short story, but also

re-creates much visual detail with his Eastern sensibilities. His visual additions not only redeem what in writing is not replicable in film, such as psychological description, but also enrich the story to fill the range of a full-length feature film. The visuality of the film accounts for the worldwide reception. Although *Brokeback Mountain* has been labeled as “a gay cowboy movie,” “American Western,” “a bisexual movie” (Andre, 2006), or critiqued as being “Chinese” as above-mentioned, above all these labels, *Brokeback Mountain* is a universal love story, set in America’s Midwest and told in a cinematic language with Eastern sensibilities.

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