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What does Brokeback Mountain (both the story and the film) show us about attitudes toward masculinity in the United States between the 1963 and the 1983 and the possible effects of these attitudes?

The film and the story Brokeback Mountain do not present homosexuality as a positive or negative phenomenon in the society, but as the unaccepted in a certain period of time and environment. The light motive is a forbidden love. While in other love stories the central gap is between rich and poor, different cultures and religions, here, the central issue presents a gap between commonly accepted and unaccepted. To be a homosexual in an environment and culture which is filled with taboos is a danger that may lead to death. The film and the story brings to its readers and viewers the attitude towards masculinity in that period of time. The mask of masculinity had to be worn in every sphere of a man's life: from the clothes to the way men spat and spoke, and relates to people who were different in anything from the majority. The film and the story Brokeback Mountain preset the image of a tough man, a man who hides its emotions, a man who rides a rodeo, and a society suffering from collective homophobia.

Jack Twist and Ennis Del Mar are two boys raised in a traditional and religious way. They are thought to look down on everything that is not "normal" according to society's unwritten law. The path of every man in 1960ies was to get married and support his family. On the surface, they were tough cowboys, difficult on words, and when they spoke their English was the language of common, uneducated people. When describing Jack Twist Annie Proulx writes: " He was infatuated with the rodeo life and fastened his belt with a minor bull-riding buckle, but his boots were worn to the quick, holed

beyond repair and he was crazy to be somewhere, anywhere else than Lightning Flat" (3). This presents the image of masculinity of the Middle West young man. The relationship between a father and a son can be noticed in the following description " Jack said his father had been a pretty well known bullrider years back but kept his secrets to himself, never gave Jack a word of advice, never came once to see Jack ride, though he had put him on the woolies when he was a little kid" (Proulx, 5). The responsibility of the head of the house was not to speak with his children, but to provide for them. There is no place for any type of emotions. People believed that in this way their sons will soften and behave as girls. This type of upbringing is also noticed in the childhood of Ennis. Ennis's father took him and his brother one day to see what happens with homosexuals, and how people burned a man with an iron tire (Proulx 13.) This image is constantly haunting Ennis and restraining him from living a fulfilled life. This is an effect of masculinity in this period of time. Ennis grows up into a silent boy unable to express his emotions. Having been raised in the similar traditional ways, Ennis and Jack do not differentiate from the others. They also incorporate beliefs that they are not " queers" and this is " A one-shot thing" (Proulx, 6). They need to behave in accordance to the society and play the gender role assigned by their immediate environment. This meant to act " tough". The toughness is also noticed in the relationship between Jack and Ennis. No matter how much they tried to resist to their love and desire for each other, they could not escape from it. Unable to express the sadness due to their departure at Brokeback Mountain they engaged in a fight. In the film, before they separated, Jack punched Ennis and Ennis slapped Jack. It was the masculine

way to express sadness of inevitable separation.

The role and the mask of cowboy hat present a part of the homophobia that existed in small rural places in Wyoming. Jack and Ennis are also homophobic, due to their up-bringing. As Keller and Jones state: " Ennis's internalized homophobia especially clear" (26). This is noticed in the passage where Ennis wonders about his sexual orientation: " I never had no thoughts a doin it with another guy except I sure wrang it out a hunderd times thinkin about you. You do it with other guys? Jack?" (Proulx, 12). On the other hand, " Jack is actively gay; he goes to Mexico to have sex with hustlers, and he comes on to other men at home, such as the rodeo clown, and poses provocatively against his truck even when he first sees Ennis" (Keller and Jones 26). However, there is one sentence that shows the general opinion towards homosexuals and forbidden things in general. It is when Ennis realizes that Jack had been murdered in the same way as two cowboys that his father has made him watch. " No, he thought, they got him with the tire iron" (Proulx, 12). In the film, images of Jack tortured by outraged men are portrayed. Ennis paid the price of his masculinity, to wonder for the rest of his life like a vagabond, and to imagine the life that he could have led with Jack.

One of the characters that looked down on them and who knew about their summer at Brokeback Mountain is Joe Aguirre. One day he saw what Jack and Ennis were doing through his binoculars on Brokeback Mountain. When Jack came the following summer to ask for a job, Joe said " Aint go no work for you" (Brokeback Mountain). Based on his facial expression the viewers may conclude that he was full of despise towards homosexuals. He may be seen

as a representative of men who despised everything different, a man full with prejudices.

That period of time between 1963 and 1983 was a period when civil rights movement flourished, when taboos were broken. The image of a lonely cowboy riding on a horse slowly disappeared and become replaced with an open-minded man, free to express its feelings. The film and the story depicts two man trapped by their idea of masculinity and the effect of it.

Proulx, Annie: Brokeback Mountain.

Brokeback Mountain Directed by Ang Lee. 2005.

Keller, R. James and Jones, G. Annie. Brokeback Mountain: Masculinity and Manhood. 2008. Web. 21. March 2014. http://pcasacas.org/SiPC/30.2/Keller_Jones.pdf