

TOTOBUANG		
Volume 12	Nomor 1 Juni 2024	Halaman ...— ...

# **GENRE AMBIGUITY IN THE PROULX'S "BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN": ITS INFLUENCE ON READERS' INTERPRETATION AND PUBLIC RECEPTION**

## **AMBIGUITAS GENRE DALAM CERPEN BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN KARYA PROULX: PENGARUHNYA TERHADAP INTERPRETASI PEMBACA DAN PENERIMAAN PUBLIK**

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Received.....; Revised.....; Accepted.....

doi: <https://doi.org/--.---/---.---.--->

### **Abstract**

*The legitimization of genre ambiguity helps to dissect the elements of literary works to understand categorization, the overall structural impact, reader interpretation, and public reception. This study aims to analyze the formative elements of the work to uncover the true genre of the "BBM" short story, evaluate how genre ambiguity influences reader interpretation, and analyze its impact on the public reception of the analyzed work. Using John G. Cawelti's genre theory and a qualitative method employing critical content analysis, this research uncovers and legitimizes the true genre of "BBM". The influence of genre ambiguity on reader interpretation is assessed through interviews with 20 readers from diverse backgrounds, while its impact on public reception is examined through reviews and critical responses from literary critics. The research findings show that the formative elements of "BBM" reveal its true genre as Gay-Romance, utilizing stereotypical Western elements to build its imagery. The genre ambiguity of BBM enriches readers' interpretations, highlighting moral conflicts, sexual identity, relationship dynamics, and global themes. The genre ambiguity of "BBM" shapes public reception with diverse critiques, ranging from narrative richness to challenges to societal norms.*

**Keywords:** Genre Ambiguity, Brokeback Mountain, Reader's Interpretation, Public Reception.

### **Abstrak**

*Legitimasi dari ambiguitas genre membantu menguraikan unsur-unsur karya sastra untuk memahami pengelompokan, dampak struktural secara keseluruhan, interpretasi pembaca, dan resepsi publik. Studi ini bertujuan menganalisis elemen-elemen formatif karya untuk mengungkap genre sejati dari cerita pendek BBM, mengevaluasi bagaimana ambiguitas genre memengaruhi interpretasi pembaca, serta menganalisis dampaknya pada resepsi publik terhadap karya yang dianalisis. Dengan menggunakan teori genre John G. Cawelti dan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis isi, kritis penelitian ini mengungkap dan memberikan legitimasi pada genre sebenarnya dari BBM. Pengaruh ambiguitas genre terhadap interpretasi pembaca dinilai melalui wawancara dengan 20 pembaca dari latar belakang yang beragam, sementara dampaknya pada resepsi publik dianalisis melalui ulasan dan tanggapan kritis dari para kritikus sastra. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa elemen formatif BBM mengungkap genre sebenarnya sebagai Gay-Romance dengan penggunaan elemen stereotipikal Western untuk membangun citra. Ambiguitas genre BBM memperkaya interpretasi pembaca, menyoroti konflik moral, identitas seksual, dinamika hubungan, dan tema global. Ambiguitas genre BBM membentuk resepsi publik dengan kritik beragam, mencakup kekayaan narasi hingga tantangan norma sosial.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** Ambiguitas Genre, Cerpen Brokeback Mountain, Interpretasi Pembaca, Penerimaan publik

## INTRODUCTION

Genre is a category or type of literary work distinguished by specific features or structures. Each genre has its own iconography or formula that shapes its identity and fulfills the expectations of the audience or readers (Sunal & Özyurt, 2022). Subgenres continue to evolve with the changing needs and expectations of the audience. Genre assists readers in forming a general understanding of a work based on their previous experiences with similar genres. While literary genre research is not directly related to sustainability issues, a deep understanding of genre can pave the way for critical thinking, cultural awareness, and reflection on social issues within a society. Therefore, genre analysis is crucial for dissecting the elements of a literary work, understanding its categorization, its overall structural impact, readers' interpretations, and public reception.

Annie Proulx's short story *Brokeback Mountain* (BBM), first published in 1997, gained widespread attention and became even more famous after being adapted for the screen by director Ang Lee in 2003. The story highlights the romantic relationship between two cowboys, Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist, who cannot be separated during their work project in the Brokeback Mountains. The story challenges the norms of American society in 1963 and confronts the disapproval of same-sex relationships at that time.

According to Tompkins (1992), BBM can be categorized as a Gay-Western, although it holds an ambiguous position within the Western genre. While it incorporates typical elements like cowboys, a bar dancer, a saloon, and other attributes, it does not strictly adhere to the basic conventions of the Western genre, such as shootouts or chases. Tompkins concluded that, while the work utilizes Western elements, it is reluctant to classify it as a pure Western piece, making it more aptly described as a Gay-Western story.

BBM, while predominantly considered a Western genre short story, challenges the basic conventions of the genre and portrays the plight of conservative society (Huston, 2006; Kovač, 2021; Mexal, 2023). Despite using the typical iconography of the Western genre, which has experienced a decrease in popularity in recent years, the short story and film successfully revitalized interest in the genre. In fact, it was adapted into a stage performance in London's West End, marking a significant revival of the Western genre's popularity (Greenwood, 2023).

Steward (2008) has a unique view regarding the genre of "Brokeback Mountain." According to him, after considering various theories and observations, BBM can be categorized as melodrama. This difference in perspective has created a confusing debate about the genre of the work, with the majority of readers and viewers tending to view BBM as a Western short story or film.

The success of BBM has led to misunderstandings and deviations in readers' interpretations. The success of the film adaptation, while bringing accolades, also had negative effects on the original author's message. Many new fans took the initiative to rewrite or continue the story of the characters Jack and Ennis, which distorted the author's vision (Máthé, 2019). This indicates the difficulty readers face in understanding the characters of BBM within the traditional Western genre framework.

Readers' opinions on BBM vary. Some praise the details and uniqueness of the story, as highlighted by Asquith (2021). Garrett emphasizes Proulx's intelligence in weaving a story about humanity, land, love, and society in Wyoming. However, there is also criticism of Proulx's occasionally ambiguous and verbose language, although it provides satisfaction through reflection and description. Proulx, sharply, defies American myths and creates a tragedy that illustrates the uncertainties of daily life. On the other hand, right-wing and religious groups criticize

BBM for being immoral, attempting to feminize men, and being anti-American. Critics also touch on the role as cowboys and challenge the concept of the "gay cowboy" in American history, calling it a mockery of the traditional Western genre (Foulkes, 2021), with controversial questions about the acceptance of homosexuality in America and views on sexuality in the Old West.

Numerous in-depth studies have been conducted to analyze genre in fiction works with the intention of identifying the fundamental elements that shape the work. In the context of the Western film genre, Setiawan, Bakti, Muhtadi, Hermansah, & Rizky (2021) recommend the application of Branston and Stanford's genre theory, taking into account the concept of life in the Quran and Hadith. This is intended to create a portrayal of struggle (jihad) within the story structure and relate it to the belief in the truth of God's creation. On the other hand, Sinulingga & Wibawa (2022) propose using Nick Lacey's Repertoire of Elements theory to evaluate the story formula in action films, especially in terms of narrative aspects, characters, style, setting, and iconography. Ali and Yaquti (2023) identify elements in drama and adventure animated films using Jane Stokes' genre theory, including images and dialogues, iconography, and narratives. Additionally, Cawelti's (1999) "The Six Gun Mystique" theory has proven effective in revealing the narrative structure of Western works, including background and iconography, character complexity, types of situations, and action patterns. Each genre has its own stereotypical structure, and precision in highlighting conventional elements of a work helps readers accurately identify the work's genre.

Genres evolve over time, influencing how readers interpret the work. For example, Sinulingga & Wibawa's (2022) action film adopts the distinctive features of the Western action film genre but adjusts the setting and iconography to match the local cultural context. Davids (2023) emphasizes cross-

fertilization as a creator of hybrid genres, underscoring the importance of filmmakers in defining genre boundaries to attract audiences. Paranyuk & Tychinina (2023) state that the emergence of new literary genres in culture is an integral part of the complex literary process, which can only be realized with the support of well-informed readers. These experts' views align with Cawelti's (1976) perspective that genres continually evolve in response to cultural developments. Therefore, each genre undergoes a unique evolution over time to meet readers' preferences, increase the popularity of works, and expand the fan base for specific genres.

Genre ambiguity impacts not only how a work is received by the public but also creates polarization in societal perspectives. Susanti, Marlisa, Herlinda & Aramudin (2023) highlight the negative role of society as antagonists, tending to be discriminatory and selfish towards a work, even considering it the main source of problems. Meanwhile, Vučković (2018) indicates that fairy tales, although often simplified as black-and-white moral narratives, actually create significant differences in perspectives, with some viewing them as a source of hope and others associating them with conservative attitudes. Therefore, genre ambiguity not only affects society's responses to a work but also gives rise to striking divergence in perspectives.

Previous research that primarily focused on genre analysis in films or literature in general has not thoroughly investigated the interaction of genre ambiguity with readers and the public. By focusing on BBM short story, this research significantly contributes to understanding genre in a literary context, addressing the limitations of previous research that were often related to film genres. The application of John G. Cawelti's genre theory provides a unique analytical perspective, while the exploration of the formulaic elements that shape literary works offers a deeper understanding of the work's structure and the

influence of genre ambiguity. The multidimensional analytical method adds complexity to understanding the impact of genre ambiguity. With a focus on the BBM short story, this research provides a unique contribution to understanding genre in a literary context, distinguishing it from more general research related to film or genres as a whole.

This research aims to analyze the formulaic elements that shape the work and summarize them to identify the true genre of the BBM short story. Additionally, this research evaluates how genre ambiguity affects readers' interpretations of the short story and analyzes the impact of genre ambiguity on the public's reception of the analyzed work.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The BBM short story is the focus of this research because it is relevant to the formula of Western works. The process begins with reading the short story to understand the narrative and distinctive Western elements. The next step involves identifying and extracting text related to the formula. Interviews were conducted with 20 readers from various backgrounds to obtain perspectives that reflect the reception of this short story. Respondents were chosen from those who had previously read the BBM short story to ensure the relevance of their reading experiences. Interview guidelines were used to gain a deeper understanding of readers' responses. Another data source is critical reviews from critics by seeking diverse cultural perspectives that consists of 10 critics. By combining data from various sources, this research provides in-depth analysis of the use of the Western work formula in BBM, ensuring a comprehensive framework for strong and diverse analysis.

This research employs Critical Content Analysis, which involves critically analyzing existing literature on common issues to identify weaknesses, contradictions, controversies, or inconsistencies and assess

each work based on specific criteria to determine its acceptability (Aguinis, Ramani, & Alabduljader, 2023). For the BBM short story data, the researcher reads the short story to trace discourse, identify narrative elements, and deconstruct the text to understand the formula that shapes the short story based on Cawelti's formula theory (1999). The conclusion drawn is the legitimization of the genre.

The research, based on qualitative content analysis, focuses on linguistic features as a communication factor related to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Sheydayi & Dadashpoor, 2023). For interview data, the researcher assesses the impact of genre ambiguity on readers' interpretations by transcribing, categorizing, reducing, and analyzing the interview results, interpretations, and generating new meanings.

To determine the impact of genre ambiguity on public reception, the analysis of critical reviews/response is conducted by identifying key points made by critics, analyzing structural aspects and language style, examining the critic's assessment of character development, interpretation of the story's message or meaning, and language use. Review writing context is reviewed, compared to similar works, and considering the impact of reviews on the understanding and reception of the short story.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

### BBM Genre Legitimation

To legitimize the genre of the short story BBM by Annie Proulx, an analysis of the story's narrative elements is necessary. These elements can be explained as follows:

#### *Plot Characteristics*

In Western stories, as per Frank Gruber, typical plot characteristics encompass Pacific Union narratives centered on road, telegraph, and railroad construction, as well as adventures involving horse-drawn carriages; ranch stories featuring conflicts between owners and thieves or ranchers and

shepherds; epic empire tales derived from ranch narratives; revenge narratives; cavalry and Indian stories; outlaw stories; and Marshal (law enforcement) tales (Cawelti, 1999). However, the short story "Brokeback Mountain" does not adhere to these plot characteristics. Its narrative structure can be summarized as follows:

1. Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist's Initial Encounter at the 1963 sheep ranch.
2. Unforeseen Intimate Bonding.
3. Returning to their separate lives, marrying, and starting families.
4. Their reunion sparks an enduring homosexual relationship.
5. Ennis' true sexual orientation is revealed to his wife, Alma, resulting in divorce.
6. Jack proposes living together and openly acknowledging their love.
7. Ennis declines cohabitation but continues rendezvousing in the Brokeback Mountains, maintaining a 20-year relationship with Jack.
8. Jack's death occurs in an accident, though Ennis suspects foul play.

The narrative framework in the BBM story closely adheres to the characteristics of a Romance narrative structure, as described by Cawelti (1976), in Romance narratives, two potential lovers are united, and their relationship encounters temporary obstacles. These challenges ultimately serve as a way to reunite the separated lovers. The underlying moral theme of a Romance narrative is the enduring and triumphant nature of love, which prevails over all obstacles and adversities. Nevertheless, the main distinction relates solely to the attributes of the primary characters. According to Cawelti (1976), he clarifies that the presence of a female central character in most romances implies an inherent link between individuals of different genders.

In the short story BBM, the author positions Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist as central characters, two men involved in a same-sex relationship that is inseparable. It

can be noted that BBM doesn't entirely conform to the conventions of a traditional romance plot; instead, it better fits the structure of a *gay-romance* narrative due to its portrayal of a same-sex couple.

### **Exploration of Setting**

The Western genre is set in the Wild West era and is geographically located in the American frontier region (between the Mississippi River and the West Coast). This view is clarified by Buscombe (2003), who divides the settings in Western films into two types: first, outdoor settings, encompassing specific locations in America such as deserts, mountains, vast plains, and wilderness forests; second, indoor settings, which include various types of locations from the past such as saloons, jails, courtrooms, farmhouses, plantations, hotels, riverboats, and the like.

Geographically, BBM is set in a 1963 Wyoming town, as evident in the following excerpt:

*In 1963 when he met Jack Twist, Ennis was engaged to Alma Beers ... That spring, hungry for any job, each had signed up with Farm and Ranch Employment -- they came together on paper as herder and camp tender for the same sheep operation north of Signal. The summer range lay above the tree line on Forest Service land on Brokeback Mountain (Brokeback Mountain, 1999: 2).*

They initially crossed paths during the summer of 1963, seeking employment as cowboys to manage sheep on Joe Aguirre's ranch in Wyoming, USA. It's worth noting that the town of Wyoming doesn't fit the typical Western geographical setting, and the year 1963 is beyond the era of the American Wild West.

As a result, the setting of the short story "Brokeback Mountain" does not meet the requirements for a Western work in terms of its social and historical context. The historical setting of a Western work refers to the Wild West era in America. The term "Wild West" can be described as follows: The Wild West

has always been a land inhabited by strong, often solitary-willed men who aim to reshape it through acts of violence and their connection with the untamed wilderness, vast open spaces, or rugged streets. In the American colonization, where heroes represented divine civilizations and Native Americans were portrayed as uncivilized pagans, acts of violence and conquest were transformed into a sacred mission, the American interpretation of the mythic struggle between good and evil (Schneekloth, 1996).

The Wild West of America encompasses the geography, history, legends, and culture during the westward expansion of American settlement, known for its rugged tales. Specifically, Tudor (2003) pinpoints the Wild West era for Western works as occurring in the American frontier between 1865 and 1890, while Barsam (2010) notes that Westerns typically unfold in the 1880s and 1890s, a time when a growing population of Civil War veterans and other eastern migrants ventured westward in search of land, gold, and the cattle trade.

Therefore, the BBM does not adhere to the fundamental rituals of a Western work, namely the historical backdrop, and thus, the thematic emphasis on law enforcement and order and the resolution of conflicts between civilization and lawlessness at the American frontier cannot be realized.

The frontier, on the other hand, is associated with the concept by Jackson Turner but is defined slightly differently. According to Turner (2017), the frontier of America consists of two main aspects: first, the American frontier lies on the vague boundaries of open land, which preserves the mobility and fluidity of American democratic life. Second, it tends to nurture an individualistic way of life on the frontier settlements that continuously revitalize the spirit of democracy in America. In this definition, the setting of the short story BBM does not portray frontier settlements in the Old West. The work depicts urban life and the

Brokeback Mountains where the two main characters spend their time working as cowboys.

### ***The Use of Stereotypical Iconography***

Iconography pertains to the clothing worn by characters and the use of stereotypical icons in Western works. Regarding the iconography related to the main characters, Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist, it is depicted from the beginning of the story:

*He gets up, scratching the grey wedge of belly and pubic hair, shuffles to the gas burner, pours leftover coffee in a chipped enamel pan; the flame swathes it in blue. He turns on the tap and urinates in the sink, pulls on his shirt and jeans, his worn boots, stamping the heels against the floor to get them full on. The wind booms down the curved length of the trailer and under its roaring passage he can hear the scratching of fine gravel and sand. It could be bad on the highway with the horse trailer. He has to be packed and away from the place that morning. Again the ranch is on the market and they've shipped out the last of the horses, paid everybody off the day before, the owner saying, "Give em to the real estate shark, I'm out a here," (Brokeback Mountain, 1999: 1).*

They wear cowboy boots, tight belts or buckles, thick shirts, bandanas, ten-gallon hats, ride horses, and use pistols as weapons. The elaboration of the simplicity of their fashion, along with the presence of horse and ranch icons, contributes to the characters' costumes and iconography in the short story helping express the Western aspect of the work. This element plays a significant role in shaping the Western imagery in the story, leading most readers to perceive it as a Western genre work.

### ***Character Complexity***

There are three stereotypical character groups in Western works: the first group consists of townspeople or agents of civilization; the second group comprises outlaws or individuals outside the protection

of the law who threaten the first group, such as bandits or Indian tribes; and the third group consists of heroic figures superior to all other groups, essentially aligned with the townspeople (Cawelti, 1999). The convention of these three types of stereotypical characters maintains the regularity of story patterns with equally stereotypical themes.

In the short story BBM, there are several characters that can be detailed as follows:

No.	Name	Description
1	Ennis Del Mar	Hero
2	Jack Twist	Hero
3	Lureen	Jack Twist's Wife/Town Person
4	Alma	Ennis Del Mar's Wife/Town Person
5	Joe Agguire	Ranch Owner/Town Person

For the town people group, there are female characters in the story. This gender division becomes an antithesis of civilization and wilderness because women are essentially symbols of civilization in Western works (Cawelti, 1999). In the short story BBM, there are two female characters who can be categorized as town people, namely: Lureen and Alma.

Alma is a modest homemaker with two children. She handles her domestic duties as a wife and mother patiently. She endures and appreciates her modest family life, instilling values of self-reliance, kindness, etiquette, and religion in her two young daughters, Alma Jr and Francine. This character's cultural code is manifested by her resistance to impulses, freedom, and aggressiveness. However, after discovering her husband's deviant sexual orientation following the reunion of Ennis and Jack, Alma eventually files for divorce from her husband, Ennis Del Mar.

*Jack took the stairs two and two. They seized each other by the shoulders, hugged mightily, squeezing the breath out of each other,*

*saying, son of a bitch, son of a bitch, then, and easily as the right key turns the lock tumblers, their mouths came together, and hard, Jack's big teeth bringing blood, his hat falling to the floor, stubble rasping, wet saliva welling, and the door opening and Alma looking out for a few seconds at Ennis's straining shoulders and shutting the door again and still they clinched, pressing chest and groin and thigh and leg together, treading on each other's toes until they pulled apart to breathe and Ennis, not big on endearments, said what he said to his horses and daughters, little darling (BBM, 1999: 9).*

### Types of Situations and Patterns of Actions

If the historical background and stereotypical characters as fundamental conventions in Western works are retained, it will result in stereotypical types of situations and patterns of actions in Western works. According to Cawelti (1999), situations in Western works are epic moments - situations that involve heroic characters driven by violence, abilities, heroism, and personal honor stemming from a wild way of life. These situations place the hero in a position of involvement and commitment to agents and also the values of civilization. Cawelti (1999) also adds that the pattern of action in Western works involves pursuit and evasion, sometimes alternating or reversing between evasion and pursuit.

The types of situations and patterns of action as described above are not found in BBM. The types of situations present in this short story are: same-sex love, tests of love, and the defeat of love. The same-sex love relationship between Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist serves as the driving force and source of the storyline in the BBM short story. The same-sex relationship they engage in leads them to contemplate the freedom to live their lives together, much like a heterosexual couple.

*Listen. I'm thinkin, tell you what, if you and me had a little ranch together, little cow and calf operation, your horses, it'd be some sweet life. Like I said, I'm gettin out a rodeo. I ain't no broke-dick rider but I don't got the bucks a ride out this slump I'm in and I don't got the bones*

*a keep gettin wrecked. I got it figured, got this plan, Ennis, how we can do it, you and me (BBM, 1999, 13).*

Jack Twist invited Ennis Del Mar to build a life together in the Brokeback Mountains, which had witnessed their love. However, Ennis rejected Jack's proposal.

*Whoa, whoa, whoa. It ain't goin a be that way. We can't. I'm stuck with what I got, caught in my own loop. Can't get out of it. Jack, I don't want a be like them guys you see around sometimes. And I don't want a be dead. There was these two old guys ranched together down home, Earl and Rich -- Dad would pass a remark when he seen them. They was a joke even though they was pretty tough old birds. I was what, nine years old and they found Earl dead in a irrigation ditch. They'd took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick until it pulled off, just bloody pulp. What the tire iron done looked like pieces a burned tomatoes all over him, nose tore down from skiddin on gravel (BBM, 1999: 13).*

Ennis rejected Jack Twist's proposal due to his long-held fear of homophobia in Wyoming. As a child, he witnessed the lifeless bodies of a gay couple dumped in a ditch after being attacked by homophobic locals who had discovered their relationship. Their deaths went unpunished by the law, as they were deemed to have violated the prevailing social norms, thus subject to such social retribution. Ennis realized that Jack's beautiful plan was a breach of these social rules.

After enduring various struggles and sacrifices, their love story concludes with profound sadness.

*Ennis didn't know about the accident for months until his postcard to Jack saying that November still looked like the first chance came back stamped DECEASED. He called Jack's number in Childress, something he had done only once before when Alma divorced him and Jack had misunderstood the reason for the call, had driven twelve hundred miles north for nothing. This would be all right, Jack would answer, had to answer. But he did not. It was Lureen and she said who? who is this? and when he told her again she said in a level voice yes, Jack was pumping up a flat on the truck out*

*on a back road when the tire blew up. The bead was damaged somehow and the force of the explosion slammed the rim into his face, broke his nose and jaw and knocked him unconscious on his back. By the time someone came along he had drowned in his own blood (BBM, 1999: 15).*

Ennis attempted to contact Jack's family in Childress after receiving a returned postcard with the words "deceased." Lureen, Jack's wife, answered the phone and provided a detailed account of her husband's death in an accident.

Hence, it is evident that the type of situation in the BBM short story is the defeat of love, characterized by a pattern of same-sex love and tests of love, which is quite distinct from the types of situations and patterns of action in Western works.

#### THE IMPACT OF GENRE AMBIGUITY ON READERS' INTERPRETATION

In BBM, there is an ambiguous impact of the genre on readers' interpretations. This impact can be outlined as follows: firstly, readers focus on the emotional and psychological conflicts of the characters (respondents 1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 13).

*"... the story deeply portrays Ennis and Jack's emotional struggles and moral dilemmas in a conservative society." (Respondent 1)*

*"... the narrative highlights cultural differences and the personal consequences of their forbidden love." (Respondent 3)*

*"... Ennis's psychological conflict reflects the challenges of societal expectations and internal identity struggles." (Respondent 6)*

*"... the story explores how love defies cultural norms but results in emotional pain for the characters." (Respondent 11)*

*"... Ennis's passive role shows his struggles to accept his feelings and societal rejection." (Respondent 12)*

*"... the narrative conveys themes of identity and the consequences of expressing forbidden love." (Respondent 13)*

Readers highlight the moral, emotional, cultural differences, and consequences of the



story. Those who focus on these conflicts analyze the narrative, characters, and related values. Conversely, the aspect of Ennis Del Mar's identity as a passive homosexual underscores the struggles and obstacles in seeking identity and expressing forbidden love.

Secondly, readers focus on rejection of norms and the struggle of sexual identity (respondents 4, 16, 17).

*"... the story shows how society rejects those who break traditional rules, causing deep personal struggles for the characters." (Respondent 4)*

*"... Ennis's journey reveals the difficulty of facing and accepting his sexual identity in a strict cultural setting." (Respondent 16)*

*"... the narrative highlights the painful conflict between personal desires and social expectations, leaving the characters emotionally torn." (Respondent 17)*

The readers observe how the BBM affects perceptions of gay identity. They express disappointment with the representation of gay characters as tragic figures or seemingly invisible, indicating that sexual identity is again hidden after the progress made in the nineteenth-century concept of identity. They highlight how the portrayal in BBM, despite its success in the United States, exposes a negative image that reduces acceptance of alternative sexualities.

Thirdly, readers focus on differences in relationship patterns (Respondents 2, 7, 10).

*"... the story highlights contrasting relationship patterns, showcasing different approaches to love and commitment between the characters." (Respondent 2)*

*"... Ennis and Jack's bond reflects a complex dynamic that differs from typical relationships portrayed in their cultural context." (Respondent 7)*

*"... the narrative contrasts traditional and unconventional relationship patterns, emphasizing their impact on the characters' emotional experiences." (Respondent 10)*

The readers highlight the unique and complex dynamics between characters in

same-sex relationships. They emphasize the differences in attitudes and approaches of the main characters, Ennis and Jack, towards their relationship, leading to discussions on masculinity, open relationships, and space as a closed symbol for their relationship. They delve into character relationships by exploring the pressures and complexities in portraying complicated same-sex romantic relationships.

Fourthly, readers focus on the Political Interpretation of Equality and Conflict (Respondents 8 and 18).

*"... the story explores power struggles and the fight for equality, highlighting political themes of societal conflict." (Respondent 8)*

*"... the narrative shows how societal systems create inequality, leading to tension and conflict in the characters' lives." (Respondent 18)*

The readers emphasize power, social position, and cultural issues in this story. They highlight the political aspect of the story, linking it to the internal conflicts of the main characters, Ennis and Jack, which end in a tragic situation without a clear solution. This interpretation emphasizes the use of the term "gay cowboy movie" and its cultural and political impact, expressing the tension between different views on respect and controversy in the story critic community and society at large.

Fifthly, readers highlight the global impact in understanding human relationships and solitude (Respondents 9, 14, 15, 19, 20).

*"... the story connects with people worldwide by showing how human relationships and solitude are universal experiences." (Respondent 9)*

*"... it portrays solitude as an essential part of human connection, reflecting themes that everyone can relate to." (Respondent 14)*

*"... the story's global appeal comes from its deep exploration of emotions linked to relationships and loneliness." (Respondent 15)*

*"... it shows how solitude and human connections go beyond cultural differences, making the narrative universally relatable." (Respondent 19)*

*"... the story emphasizes common struggles in relationships, highlighting the shared human experience of loneliness and connection." (Respondent 20)*

Readers emphasize the influence of the BBM at both global and local levels. They emphasize how this story contributes to social change and policies, including the spread of laws against homophobia and recognition of LGBT communities in history. Emphasizing solitude, character transformation, and issues related to the relationship between solitude, admiration, friendship, and compassion becomes the focal point in understanding the global impact and its influence on contemporary sexual identity debates in society.

In conclusion, the ambiguous genre impact in the BBM short story presents diverse reader interpretations. Moral conflicts, struggles of sexual identity, differences in relationship patterns, political interpretations, and global impact are the main focuses in understanding the complex nuances of the story. Each approach offers rich perspectives on the themes and issues raised in the story.

#### **GENRE AMBIGUITY AFFECTS PUBLIC RECEPTION OF BBM**

There are various criticisms regarding the expectations of the genre in the story of *BBM*. Some critics might feel that the story doesn't align with the usual Western genre expectations, due to ambiguity that makes the story challenging to identify or categorize. As noted by Critic 1:

*"... the story challenges traditional Western genre expectations, creating ambiguity that makes it difficult to categorize."*

While Critic 6 perceives weaknesses, stating that:

*"... the exploration of the Western genre feels underdeveloped, leaving gaps in its portrayal,"*

Critic 7 offers a more positive evaluation, explaining that:

*"... despite some ambiguity, the story successfully integrates elements of the Western genre into its development."*

These critics provide diverse perspectives on how the expectations of the Western genre are addressed in the *BBM* story, ranging from highlighting its interpretive complexity to assessing its success in blending traditional elements with modern themes.

There's an increased diversity in the narrative. The ambiguity of the genre allows the story to encompass various narrative elements and themes. Some critics view this as a strength, as it provides deeper layers to the story. Critic 2 acknowledges the narrative diversity, giving high praise to the diverse narrative aspects presented and recognizing the story's ability to convey various and diverse perspectives while upholding quality in this diverse approach.

*"... the ambiguity enriches the story, allowing it to explore multiple themes and resonate with diverse interpretations," (Critic 2).*

On the other hand, Critic 8 offers a positive assessment of the narrative diversity, indicating that the narrative can present richer and more diverse dimensions.

*"... by blending various elements, the narrative gains depth and complexity, making it more engaging and thought-provoking," (Critic 8)*

In short, these critics emphasize the narrative's diverse and varied elements, contributing to a more nuanced and layered storytelling.

Challenges to social norms are reflected in this story, especially with the inclusion of LGBTQ+ elements in a different genre context. Responses from several critics may vary, with some viewing it as a challenge to conventional social norms. Critic 3's assessment highlights the diverse social dimensions within the story, indicating an awareness of the challenges faced by the characters and their relationship with social norms, as they navigate societal expectations:

*"...the story highlights the challenges the characters face as they navigate social norms."*

Conversely, Critic 9 emphasizes how Jack's death illustrates the harsh realities of societal rejection:

"...Jack's death illustrates the harsh realities of societal rejection."

In conclusion, the story challenges social norms, and critics' opinions vary in evaluating this aspect.

There are critiques regarding the characterization in this story. Evaluation of the main characters, Ennis and Jack, can vary. Some might consider these two characters to be complex and profound, while others may perceive a lack in character development. Critic 4 provides diverse feedback on the characterization, offering a high rating.

"... the characters, Ennis and Jack, are rich and multi-dimensional, adding great depth to the story." (Critic 4)

He highlights the depth of the characters and how this becomes a significant strength in the story. Critiques of Ennis and Jack's characterization can be diverse, although Critic 4 highlights the depth of character as one of the story's strong points.

There are criticisms about the influence of language and style in the story. The ambiguity of the genre is sometimes reflected in the use of language and writing style. Critics may evaluate how these elements affect the story's overall impact. Critic 4 notes:

"The use of language and style is well-crafted, adding depth to the story and effectively conveying complex emotions."

Similarly, Critic 5 gives a positive assessment, highlighting the strength of expression and delivery in the narrative. These evaluations suggest that the story's language and style contribute significantly to its depth and emotional resonance, despite differing interpretations of its genre ambiguity.

## CLOSING

The accumulation of narrative elements in BBM does not categorize it as a Western genre work. Instead, BBM is a *Gay-Romance*

genre work that makes use of stereotypical Western elements, such as cowboy boots, tight-fitting belts or buckles, thick shirts, bandanas, ten-gallon hats, horseback riding, guns as weapons, and ranching. In other words, the costumes and iconography in BBM contribute to expressing the *Western* nature of the work. This aspect plays a significant role in shaping the Western imagery in the story, which is why many readers perceive it as a Western genre work.

The ambiguous genre in *Brokeback Mountain* invites diverse reader interpretations, enriching its narrative depth. Readers focus on moral and emotional conflicts, struggles with sexual identity, relationship dynamics, political themes, and global human experiences. These perspectives highlight the story's exploration of societal norms, equality, and solitude, providing profound insights into the complexities of identity and relationships. Ultimately, the story's ambiguity broadens its impact, fostering critical discussions on cultural, political, and emotional dimensions of human connection.

The genre ambiguity in *Brokeback Mountain* significantly shapes public reception, sparking diverse critiques. While some view the blending of Western elements with modern themes as enriching the narrative's depth, others see it as underdeveloped or challenging to categorize. Critics praise the story's multidimensional characters, emotional resonance, and narrative diversity, which offer layered interpretations. However, the integration of LGBTQ+ themes and challenges to societal norms evoke mixed reactions, underscoring the complexity of the story's impact.

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**Commented [U1]:** • Nama buku *Brokeback Mountain* tertulis keliru. Seharusnya *Brokeback Mountain*. (COBA PASTIKAN LAGI)

• Judul buku oleh Frank Gruber, disebutkan tanpa referensi yang jelas. Perlu diperiksa apakah ini benar mengacu ke karya yang relevan.

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