

## ARTS & BOOKS

### [Brokeback Mountain revives the debate on gay love on screen.](#)

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***Brokeback Mountain* was awarded several Oscars for its artistic qualities but one of its greatest virtues is that the film revived the debate on homosexuality on screen.**



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*Brokeback Mountain*, inspired by a short story by Annie Proulx, tells the story of two homosexual ranchers who loved each other in the 1970s. It is not the first film to deal with homosexuality but it has to be said that Hollywood has not often tackled this sensitive topic. Big studio productions featuring gay men or lesbians are very few. *Philadelphia* directed by Jonathan Demme and starring Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington was an exception to the rule and it dates back to 1993. In this film, an AIDS infected lawyer is dismissed for professional misconduct by his new associates whom he then sues, to reclaim his dignity and justice.

*Brokeback Mountain* brings a different perspective to the debate on homosexuality. The protagonists in the film aren't perfect heroes like the one in *Philadelphia*. They are common people, two farmers who live in rural America in the 70s, and not affluent urbanites. *Brokeback Mountain* depicts homosexuality in a natural setting and in a very naturalistic way. The fact that director Ang Lee used cowboys to embody his gay love story gave rise to mixed reactions. To many, cowboys and John Wayne look-alikes with Stetson hats on are the true paragons of American masculinity, the closest you can get to the ideal American.

Unsurprisingly, the film sparked a series of more or less benign parodies. All of these assume the same form: they are trailers for imagined mashups that combine elements of *Brokeback Mountain* with other movies. One could quote the *Empire Breaks Back* and *Brokeback Goodfellas*. These parodies have in turn generated both anger and praise, and initiated a debate about whether they are harmless fun or insulting and homophobic. A lot of these spoofs did turn a beautiful love story into rather vulgar pornographic films. Matt Foreman of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force commented, "It's gotten way over the top. It's a very sad movie. And yet it's spawned this entire industry of essentially anti-gay humour."\* At least, it has brought the subject of homoeroticism and homosexual love in the movies back to the center stage.

Sources: \*« Cowboy Yarn Triggers a Wave of Parodies, » *The Observer* 05 March 2006.  
« Brokeback Spoof: Tough Guys Unmasked, » *The New York Times* 02 March 2006.  
« Hollywood in Trouble, » *The Independent* 03 March 2006.  
« Gender Trouble, » *The New York Times* 12 March 2006.  
« The Oscar for the Best Banned Picture, » *The New York Times* 12 March 2006.  
« Upset "Brokeback" Fans Advertise Their Feelings, » *The New York Times* 13 March 2006.