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MULFORD AND BOWER:

MYTH AND HISTORY IN THE EARLY WESTERN

WILLIAM A. BLOODWORTH, JR.

With the exception of commentary on Owen Wister and *The Virginian* (1902), surprisingly little has been written about popular western novels published before World War I.¹ Yet it was writers following in the wake of *The Virginian*'s popularity who really developed and defined the mass-audience western of commercial prospects and formulaic content. B. M. Bower, Clarence Mulford, William McCleod Raine, and Charles Alden Seltzer prepared the way for the later and greater popularity of Zane Grey, whose books first became best-sellers between 1912 and 1917; for the prolific productions of pulp writers like Max Brand after 1918; and for the rise of the western film industry. Although the early 1920s may be the first period when American interest in the popular western reached obsessive proportions (Grey was then a regular feature on best-seller charts, pulp publications like *Western Story Magazine* were in full flower, and W. S. Hart

was a box-office staple), the Progressive Era was the breeding ground of the western.

To understand the western in its early period of development, we should direct our attention away from Wister's high-toned novel, the end product of fifteen years' work with western materials, and restrain our urges to leap into the purple landscapes and raging passions of Zane Grey. Two other writers, among the first to capitalize on the market Wister created, will serve our purposes better. These are Clarence Edward Mulford, who created Hopalong Cassidy, and B. M. (Bertha Muzzey) Bower, the only woman to become an important writer of westerns. Beginning from quite different points—Mulford's stories born out of his juvenile fascination with dime novels and Bower's out of her own experience in the West—the two writers developed large readerships and produced essentially formulaic novels with considerable speed and facility. When Douglas Branch wrote *The Cowboy and His Interpreters* in 1926, he named both Mulford and Bower (along with Raine and Seltzer) as "aristocrats of cow-country fiction" on "the seventy-five-cent shelves."²

Both common and contrasting features of Mulford and Bower are the subject of this

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essay. In their exploitation of the western as a source of comedy and their emphasis on themes of community rather than true individualism, they share qualities of innocence and nostalgia reflecting the optimism of the Progressive Era. Beyond these shared qualities, Mulford and Bower demonstrate an essential choice between myth and history, a fork in the road of American popular culture, that faced the western during its first decade and has shown up frequently in the later landscapes of the literary West.

COMEDY AND COMMUNITY

Especially when paired together, Mulford and Bower serve well to illustrate the development and themes of the popular western between *The Virginian* and World War I. To begin with, both were prolific writers. Mulford published six novels between 1906 and 1913, Bower fourteen between 1904 and 1916. Each continued to write after these years—Mulford publishing his last novel in 1941 and Bower active until her death in 1940—but their essential styles and audiences were established long before World War I.³ Furthermore, between 1902 and 1916, both published western fiction almost exclusively, and both used the same characters and setting for different novels. Mulford invented Hopalong Cassidy and the Bar-20 Ranch in West Texas; Bower's fame grew out of her Flying U Ranch in north-central Montana and its "Happy Family" of cowboys. In other words, Mulford and Bower were formula writers, users of conventions rather than literary innovators, who had a clear understanding of what their readers most appreciated. That Mulford was a man who believed in the values of male companionship and Bower was a woman who felt some identity with her female characters may be an added reason for paying attention to this pair of popular writers.

Although it is the differences between Mulford and Bower that finally stand out, their stories, taken together, indicate the general appeal of early westerns. Many of the simi-

larities are what we would expect: an interest in ranch life, the use of working cowboys as main characters (even in romantic plots), the occasional appearance of eastern types for the sake of contrast, a sense of western geography as simultaneously harsh and grand, and a good deal of factual attention to such matters as cattle branding and bronc busting. Somewhat unlike *The Virginian*, novels by Mulford and Bower feature not only cowboys but also cows. Yet as William Savage points out in his study of the cowboy hero, no one has ever portrayed the cowboy both "accurately and interestingly at the same time."⁴ Evidence for this fact in Mulford and Bower lies in their most significant similarities: a perception of the West as a stage for comic action and an emphasis on collective rather than individualistic social order in the West. It took style and theme, of rather specific kinds, to make the cowboy a regular feature of popular adult fiction.

Humor is an essential element—perhaps *the* essential element as far as popularity was concerned—in virtually every book published by Mulford and Bower. Both writers, but Mulford in particular, relied on humor of dialogue and character. Their cowboys are funny; they josh endlessly with one another and poke fun from Mexico to Montana. In Mulford's *Bar-20 Days* (1911), when Hopalong Cassidy and his sidekick Red Connors are on the verge of extinction at the hands of renegade Apaches, we find out that "no matter how desperate a situation might be, [Hopalong] could find in it something at which to laugh. He laughed going into danger and coming out of it, with a joke or a pleasantry always trembling at the end of his tongue."⁵ "Chuckles and cowboy lingo," to quote an advertising blurb, became more important to Mulford in his later books than in his early ones, but even in such a novel as *The Orphan* in 1908, his cowboys are hardly the grim, silent type; when a gang of them turn up for a meal at the sheriff's house, "a perfect babel of words" ensues as "the cowboys burst into a running fire of jokes, salutations, and comments."⁶ Bower's westerns also emphasize the verbal cleverness of cowboys, particularly

when it has a tongue-in-cheek flavor. In *Flying U Ranch* (1914), when the main character stumbles into the bunkhouse after having been trussed from neck to knee with his own rope by a couple of irate sheepmen—and thus resembling a giant cocoon—his closest friend quietly observes, “I sure do hate to see a man wearing funny things just to make himself conspicuous.”⁷ As this example indicates, Bower’s humor often extends beyond dialogue to a playfully presented situational irony. In fact, her best-known novel, *Chip of the Flying U* (1906), is a kind of extended shaggy-dog story in which the sexual identity of a Dr. Cecil Grantham, a woman, remains a secret to the title character until the final pages of the story.

The humor in these early stories provides a genuine contrast to later westerns by other writers whose work conveys a deeply serious mood or an ever-present sense of danger. Nowhere in Mulford or Bower, for instance, can we find a tense, brooding character like Buck Duane in Zane Grey’s *Lone Star Ranger*, who suffers from a “haunting visitation . . . a remorse gnawing at his vitals . . . the furies of accusing guilt” after the first time he kills a man.⁸ The tragic wildness of Dan Barry, in Max Brand’s *Untamed* series, which ultimately drives Barry’s wife to kill him, is another example.⁹ More recent writers, like Ernest Haycox or Louis L’Amour, continued the trend away from humor and the early, almost blithe insouciance of tone. This difference suggests the innocence of early westerns, an innocence that even extensive violence (in the case of Mulford) fails to diminish.¹⁰

The similarity in humor between Mulford and Bower is mainly a matter of style. The other major similarity involves social content. In novels by both Mulford and Bower the dominant social order is not that of the lone rider, but of the bunkhouse. This is especially clear in Mulford’s Bar-20 series, in which most of the original Bar-20 punchers are given moments of literary glory as the central character of an episode or an entire novel. Even though Hopalong Cassidy is recognized as a kind of hero among heroes, the emphasis falls on the group rather

than the individual. At one point in *The Coming of Cassidy* (1913) Red Connors describes the unity among the Bar-20 cowboys: “People have called us clannish, an’ said we was a ‘lovin’ bunch’ because we stick together so tight. We’ve faced so much together that us of th’ old bunch has got the same blood in our veins. We ain’t eight men—we’re one man in eight different kinds of bodies.”¹¹ This group spirit is endlessly exemplified in the novels. Most significantly, Mulford’s West lacks characters like Wister’s Judge Henry or the feudal order implied in *The Virginian*’s careful distinctions between ranch owner, foreman, and cowboy.

Bower likewise draws upon an equalitarian cowboy paradigm, although her novels often allow outside social forces and historical change to conflict with the male community of the bunkhouse. Her commitment to group values explains several features of her fiction: the identification of the Flying U boys as a “Happy Family”; her willingness to make protagonists out of many members of that family; and her emphasis on a pervading harmony in the bunkhouse (which is somewhat rare among western writers) in spite of personality traits ranging from the morose pessimism of a puncher named Happy Jack to the genial optimism of one Weary Davidson. Furthermore, in both Bower and Mulford, when cowboys marry (as many eventually or temporarily do), they not only remain cowboys but are often able to retain their bunkhouse relationships by bringing their wives into the social and working affairs of the ranch. In Bower this is possible even if the wife is a medical doctor from Ohio.

Douglas Branch’s description of what he believed cowboy life was actually like (“nothing in the cowboy’s society was more important than the cowboy himself”) does not entirely agree with what we find in the westerns of Mulford and Bower; nor does the image of cowboy individualism that pervades American advertising and popular music today.¹² The group values explicit in Mulford and Bower, like their use of humor, can be read as a reflection of larger cultural attitudes, particularly

the Progressive Era's emphasis on democratic action and the long-standing American belief in the virtues of masculine companionship. The popular western was certainly not an avatar of American individualism in its beginning, no matter what the genre later became. Its cultural significance lies less in images of restless roaming or solitary knight-errantry than it does in the youthful conviviality of the bunkhouse.

MYTH VS. HISTORY

To see such similarities in Mulford and Bower, however, may either suggest casuistry or tend to subordinate their works to general trends. Literary history, even the history of popular literature, quite rightly demands that we pay homage to uniqueness. In the respective cases of Clarence Mulford and B. M. Bower, uniqueness may exist only within the limitations of mass appeal, but it exists nevertheless. And what it indicates is a fundamental difference in the form, and to some extent in the meaning, of popular westerns.

The difference can be illustrated reasonably well by citing two passages, one from each author. Both are opening descriptions of the western setting in which the stories take place. The first one sets the stage for *Hopalong Cassidy* (1910), Mulford's third novel:

The raw and mighty West, the greatest stage in all the history of the world for so many deeds of daring which verged on the insane, was seared and cross-barred with grave-lined trails and dotted with presumptuous, mushroom towns of brief stay whose inhabitants flung their primal passions in the face of humanity and laughed in condescending contempt at what humanity had to say about it. . . .

From the gold camps of the Rockies to the shrieking towns of the coast, where wantonness walked unchecked; from the vast stretches of the cattle ranges to the ever-advancing terminals of the persistent railroads, to the cow-towns, boiling and seething in their revels, no one section of the country ever boasted of such numbers of genuine bad-men . . . as the great, semi-



Clarence Mulford at work in his study in Fryeburg, Maine. Courtesy of the Public Library, Fryeburg, Maine.

arid Southwest. Here was one of the worst collections of raw humanity ever broadcast in one locality; here the crack of the gun would have sickened except that moralists were few and the individual so calloused and so busy in protecting his own life and wiping out his own scores that he gave no heed to the sum total of the killings; it was a word and a shout, a shot and a laugh or a curse.¹³

This is the West of William S. Hart's *Hell's Hinges* (1916), and it is the West that lives within the mind of the Swede in Crane's "The Blue Hotel." It is also the West of the dime novel, whose "most notable characteristic" was a "plethora of violence";¹⁴ and as such it points directly to Mulford's own immersion in Wild West books in his youth.¹⁵

The passage from Bower also opens a story, but in a fashion quite unlike Mulford's. It is from *The Flying U's Last Stand* (1915):

Progress is like the insidious change from youth to old age, except that progress does not mean decay. The change that is almost imperceptible and yet inexorable is much the same, however. You will see a community apparently changeless as the years pass by; and yet, when the years have gone and you look back, there has been a change. It is not the same. It never will be the same.



B. M. BOWER

Courtesy of William A. Bloodworth, Jr.

It can pass through further change, but it cannot go back. Men look back, sick sometimes with longing for the things that were and that can be no more; they live the old days in memory—but try as they will they may not go back. With intelligent, persistent effort they may retard further change considerably, but that is the most that they can hope to do.¹⁶

Here I have stacked the deck by quoting one of the few Bower novels that begin with an expository passage. My purpose in doing so is to make clear her sense of change and history. Her setting, not only in *The Flying U's Last Stand* but in virtually every one of her novels written before 1915, is not the mythical West of good men versus bad; rather, it is the historical West of change and development.

Whereas Mulford's stories seem informed by the kinds of settings and plots found in earlier dime novels, Bower's represent a willingness to allow history itself a role in shaping character and events.¹⁷

Bower's sense of history reflects her own experience in the West. Born in Minnesota in 1871, she moved to Chouteau County, Montana, in early childhood; in adulthood she lived in Idaho, Nevada, and California.¹⁸ Unlike Mulford, who was born in Illinois in 1883 but moved east to Brooklyn, where he learned of the West through books, Bower had first-hand knowledge not only of the ranching frontier but also of developments elsewhere in the West. Mulford never crossed the Mississippi until 1924, when he was thirty-seven years old and already a household word among readers of westerns. Nor did he particularly like what he saw when he finally went west.¹⁹

The fundamental difference between Mulford and Bower, then, is a difference between myth and history, and this difference can be seen not only in their words but also in the ways that each came to know the West: one as a literary presentation and the other as a proposition of actual experience. Perhaps the difference has something to do with sexual roles, too. The woman who grew up in the West was, quite simply, more concerned with social change than was a fantasy-prone man in Brooklyn.²⁰

Lest we open a Pandora's box of definitions, we need to explain carefully the polarities of myth and history as the terms are used here. By linking Mulford's stories with myth I wish to draw attention primarily to their form. Mulford wrote stories that are mythlike in setting, characters, and action. His westerns have narrative features that imply a radical disjunction between them and the realistic experience of place, time, and personality; his fiction is free of many of the restraints (including the force of historical change itself) that human beings ordinarily recognize in the actual world.

Bower, in contrast, wrote stories that recognize restraint, particularly that imposed by

historical change. Mulford, who maintained a keen interest in factual minutiae and filled thousands of notecards with information, nevertheless created a West not of history but of stasis.²¹ Bower wrote of a changing West. This fact does not make her a literary realist, but it does identify her efforts to reconcile the patterns of formula in the early western with the patterns of social change in her own lifetime. To clarify the differences between Mulford's mythic westerns and Bower's far more historical ones, we can examine three specific points of comparison: the authors' depiction of time and landscape, their characters, and their treatment of violence.

Mulford's setting in his early novels is always the legendary past, never even the recent past, and his landscape is an imaginary Southwest. Although Mulford apparently went to great pains to ensure the accuracy of topographical features, he felt completely free to draw in marauding bands of Apaches or organized gangs of rustlers wherever needed. And in the heat of chasing Indians, Mulford's cowboys have little trouble beginning in Texas and ending up in Arizona.²² His is a neo-Homeric world of great mobility and pitched battles.

Bower's stories take place in the present or, at the most, only a few years in the past. Cameras—Kodaks by name—appear with some frequency in her West, as do other material signs of progress. Several of her westerns even deal with filmmaking on location.²³ The settings are apparently the places Bower herself knew: Chouteau County, Montana; Albuquerque; Portland; and Los Angeles. Roaming is kept pretty much to the local vicinity, and roaring conflicts are rare. The land itself imposes restraints on Bower's characters more than it does on Mulford's, as do the facts of historical change. Bower's cowboys must fence in their range, whereas the Bar-20 gang lashes out against history by cutting the wires strung legally across their trail.²⁴

The people are more important than the places in the early western. Mulford's characters are usually typed as good or bad, with no

one in between. The reputation he builds for his Bar-20 cowboys could hardly be more mythic: they are "the most famous of all from Canada to the Rio Grande . . . the most restless gang of daredevil gun-fighters that ever pounded leather."²⁵ In the case of Hopalong Cassidy himself, the character exudes a Shane-like sense of power even when he first appears, at age nineteen, known only as Bill Cassidy: "The air seemed to be charged with danger. . . . The guns proclaimed the gunman as surely as it would have been proclaimed by a sign."²⁶

Bower's cowboys are not legendary. They are well known in their area and respected for their cowpunching abilities but have no status at all as gunfighters. Whereas Hopalong Cassidy is a two-gun man of extraordinary skill, Chip of the Flying U doesn't even carry a six-shooter. But it is Bower's women, not her male characters, who most reflect her tendency toward history rather than myth. There are women in the novels by Mulford, but they tend to be either prostitutes who should be avoided, fair young daughters of the West who can't be avoided, or wives whose primary skills lie in making cowboys drool over their pies. In any case, Mulford makes only what use of women he must and then returns to the boys and their battles as quickly as he can. Bower brings women to her West and often makes them the center of attention. In *Chip of the Flying U*, for instance, Della Whitmore travels to Montana to live on her brother's ranch; there she quickly adapts and makes more things happen than does the male title character. *Lonesome Land* (1912), perhaps the most serious of Bower's stories, tells of an eastern woman who marries her fiancé, who had moved to Montana three years before, only to find that he has become an alcoholic; the West defeats her husband, but it toughens her to the point where she demands a divorce.²⁷ Other examples would illustrate that Bower's women, although without great complexity, serve as connecting links to historical reality. In *The Flying U's Last Stand*, for instance, a real estate agent who tries to locate gullible homesteaders on arid Montana soil happens to be a



William Boyd (*Hopalong Cassidy*), left, and Clarence Mulford in the early 1950s. Courtesy of the Public Library, Fryeburg, Maine.

woman and serves more or less as the villain of the novel.

Perhaps the most intriguing point of comparison between Mulford and Bower is their treatment of violence. Conventional knowledge has it that violence is the hallmark of the western, with blazing six-guns its most prominent feature. In Mulford this generalization is inescapably true. The violence in his novels is Homeric in scope. *Bar-20*, for instance, his first book, contains at least sixteen different shooting scrapes. The most important fight is a shootout in the town of Buckskin where the Bar-20 boys gun down the C-80, a conflict of such proportions that it becomes a matter of cherished legend in later Mulford stories. The description of a wrecked barroom after the

fight catalogs "the ruined furniture, a wrecked bar, seared and shattered and covered with blood; bodies as they had been piled in the corners"; and other debris.²⁸ The carnage beats anything in Max Brand (where in *Singing Guns*, for instance, the hero fires only two shots, killing no one) and out-bloodies both *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Long Riders*.²⁹ Furthermore, it is such violence that establishes the reputations of Hopalong Cassidy and his cohorts. Unlike virtually every other western writer, Mulford never gives his heroes reason to regret their gunfighter status. Yet violence of Mulford's kind—always successfully directed at "bad" men but still inconsiderate of human life—is virtually synthesized with his cowboy humor, his lingo and chuckles. Jokes are fired off intermittently with bullets.

In Bower there is almost no violence. Guns are mainly kept in the bunkhouse and only occasionally used on animals or for the sake of show. At times Bower almost parodies the violence typical of the dime novel and of Mulford. In *Chip of the Flying U*, for instance, the cowboys agree to stage a mock lynching in order to frighten Della Whitmore into leaving Montana (her intelligent feminism—she's a doctor—being perceived immediately as a threat to their bunkhouse ethos). In *The Virginian* lynching is a matter of almost incomprehensible cruelty to Molly Wood; she can hardly think about it, much less see it. In Bower's story lynching is not only reduced to pretense, but it is a sham that Della sees through completely. Her knowing response is "Hurry up . . . so I can be in on the death."³⁰

The quality and presence (or absence) of violence in westerns by Mulford and Bower leads to a curious, paradoxical conclusion. In Mulford the portrayal of the West as a place of lead-slinging and death actually negates the meaning of what he describes and reduces the emotional impact of the violence. The shootings, woundings, and dyings in novels like *The Orphan* and *Hopalong Cassidy* convey little sense of reality beyond that of an aesthetic or mythical projection; they seem hardly accountable to the facts of real life as those facts are

ordinarily understood. The slugs that plow into the badmen (ruthless rustlers, renegade Indians, conniving greasers, and other stereotypes) in Mulford's stories—including the 550-grain bullets of the Sharp's buffalo rifle that Hopalong uses with unerring accuracy—pass by the reader with little effect. Bower shows a general hesitancy to engage in melodrama, to make the West "spectacular without being probable," as one of her women says;³¹ thus the author makes sure that her few isolated scenes of violence will indeed make an impression.

The common features of Mulford and Bower—their view of the West as comic and their lack of interest in seeing cowboys as paragons of individualism, along with evocations of nostalgia and innocence—locate the roots of the western in the Progressive Era and may help identify attitudes of that period. To avoid simplifying history, however, we must note that Mulford and Bower were "of the Progressive Era" but not necessarily "Progressive" in any specific social or political sense. (Even Bower, who recognized social change and sometimes sought to reconcile it with themes of nostalgia and romance, is not likely to be mentioned in the same breath with Jane Addams or Margaret Sanger.) Early westerns merely illuminate tendencies at work in popular culture and show that the times were congenial and supportive. A point that Richard Etulain has made—that the West "symbolized a simpler or more primitive and pristine past that many Progressives wished to retain"—needs little revision.³²

The respective trails of myth and history in early westerns by Mulford and Bower are less important as reflections of their times than as forerunners of what followed. Mulford's mythic inventiveness seems to have won out in later forms of the genre, particularly in the pulp westerns of the twenties and the thirties. His good-versus-evil dichotomy, along with his unabashed interest in violence of near-homicidal magnitude, was picked up by Zane Grey and other writers. The genuine grit in his writings—the facts of cowboy work, the bunk-house joshing, the sweat and smells of ranch

life—did not always survive, for the cowboy hero later often drew upon the caricature of the solitary knight-errant, the isolato, the gunman *qua* gunman.

Perhaps Mulford's most significant contribution to the popular western was the static quality of his setting, the West as mythic in form, the frontier violently active yet frozen in time between wildness and order. It was also this quality of the popular West that contributed not only to its appeal but also to its usefulness as formularized narrative. Freed from the restraints of change, stories could continually begin again, even on a weekly basis. In this respect, it is appropriate to note the ironic disgust that Mulford felt when William Boyd became Hopalong Cassidy in movies and on television. No longer the rough-and-tumble cowboy of Mulford's books, Hoppy on the screen was a polite, white-haired ranch *owner*. "Bill Boyd isn't Hopalong Cassidy," Mulford once said.³³ William Savage reports a rumor that Mulford actually fainted when he first saw Boyd on the screen. "Smelling salts revived him then, and the money he made from the cinematic versions of his work sustained him later."³⁴

Identifying Bower's descendants among the later manifestations of the western is more difficult. Her combination of historical awareness, infrequent violence, and women on the range seems to have lost favor after World War I—or to have drifted into the hands of more serious writers like Conrad Richter. Bower herself began to move away from westerns after the war. As the ranching frontier receded into the past, so did her interest in the kind of stories that had made her popular, for she wrote best of a West in process, not a static West. And as the distance between the frontier and American readers increased, accelerated by war and rapid social change, so did the prospects for transforming history into myth.

NOTES

1. Detailed critical discussion of specific authors and books, except for Wister and *The*

Virginian, is particularly hard to come by. Single-chapter surveys dealing briefly with many writers are the rule. These appear in Douglas Branch, *The Cowboy and His Interpreters* (New York: D. Appleton, 1926); Joe B. Frantz and Julian Ernest Choate, Jr., *The American Cowboy: The Myth and the Reality* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955); Russel B. Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970); C. L. Sonnichsen, *From Hopalong to Hud: Thoughts on Western Fiction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979); and John Milton, *The Novel of the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980). Nye's is the best survey. John Cawelti, in both *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1971) and *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), provides penetrating analyses of both the form and the social and psychological implications of the western; but in so doing he blurs distinctions between print and film and fails to discuss any early westerns besides *The Virginian*.

2. Branch, *The Cowboy*, p. 238.

3. By focusing only on westerns written between 1902 and 1916, I do not mean to imply that Mulford and Bower were unimportant later. Mulford not only published such well-known westerns as *Johnny Nelson* (1920) and *Me an' Shorty* (1929) in the twenties, but he lived until 1956, long enough to see Hopalong Cassidy cleaned up and transformed into a movie and television hero. Bower wrote throughout the twenties and thirties, often experimenting with other popular genres besides the western. Both writers drew their inspiration from the first decade of the century, however, and should be seen primarily as examples of the popular culture of the Progressive Era.

4. William W. Savage, Jr., *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 113.

5. Clarence E. Mulford, *Bar-20 Days* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1911), p. 157.

6. Clarence E. Mulford, *The Orphan* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1908), p. 299.

7. B. M. Bower, *Flying U Ranch* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1914), p. 116.

8. Zane Grey, *The Lone Star Ranger* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1915), p. 36.

9. The *Untamed* series includes *The Untamed* (first published in serial form in 1918), *The Night Horseman* (1920), and *The Seventh Man* (1921).

10. The cultural innocence described by Henry F. May in *An End to Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Time, 1912-1917* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1959), especially the absence of conscious irony and felt ambiguity, is also that of the early western. David B. Davis's "Ten-Gallon Hero," *American Quarterly* 6 (Summer 1954): 111-25, describes the early cowboy hero as "pre-adolescent," "light-hearted," and "placid"—that is, the embodiment of American fantasies of innocence.

11. Clarence E. Mulford, *The Coming of Cassidy* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1913), p. 211.

12. Branch, *The Cowboy*, p. 157. William Savage, in discussing the image of the cowboy in popular music, says, "Good or bad, right or wrong, he determines his own fate, and no one else—no individual, no institution—successfully intervenes"; see *The Cowboy Hero*, p. 93.

13. Clarence E. Mulford, *Hopalong Cassidy* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910), pp. 1-2.

14. Daryl E. Jones, "Blood 'n' Thunder: Virgins, Villains, and Violence in the Dime Novel Western," *Journal of Popular Culture* 4 (Fall 1970): 507.

15. Joseph A. Perham, in "Reflections on Hopalong Cassidy: A Study of Clarence E. Mulford" (M.A. thesis, University of Maine, 1966), quotes one of Mulford's high-school classmates to show exactly how influenced Mulford was by dime novels: "He was not studious. He would sit there with one of those old five-cent paper-back, wild-west books—Buffalo Bill, Kit Carson—inside his school book and read them throughout the study periods. He kept the desk so crowded with them that there was scarcely room for anything else" (p. 2).

16. B. M. Bower, *The Flying U's Last Stand* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915), p. 1.

17. By doing so, Bower follows Wister's interest (in *The Virginian*, at least) in depicting the western hero as capable of responding to

historical change; by the end of *The Virginian* the hero is a coal baron, whereas the villain, Trampas, who cannot change with the times, is dead. Bower's awareness of historical change and her willingness to make change a part of her westerns should be understood as somewhat different from simply using historical events and figures. For example, Ernest Haycox's much later desire to write a "meaty, detailed, panoramic novel" suggests other motives. Haycox's words are quoted in Richard W. Etulain, "The Literary Career of a Western Writer: Ernest Haycox, 1899-1950" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1966), pp. 122-23.

18. Bower was born Bertha Muzzey. The first of her three husbands was Bower. She divorced Bower and became Bertha M. Sinclair about the time she started writing westerns, thus making "B. M. Bower" a kind of pseudonym that was often taken to be the name of a male author. Three publications, all appearing in 1973, comprise virtually all that has been written about the life of this fascinating and skillful American woman writer: Roy W. Meyer's "B. M. Bower: The Poor Man's Wister," *Journal of Popular Culture* 7 (Winter 1973): 667-79; Orrin A. Engen's *Writer of the Plains* (Culver City, Calif.: Pontine Press, 1973), a 56-page pamphlet; and Stanley R. Davison's "Chip of the Flying U: The Author Was a Lady," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 23 (Spring 1973): 3-15. Professor Davison, of Western Montana College, informs me (in a letter of November 23, 1980) that Bower's papers, especially any information pertaining to her marriages, were probably destroyed after her death by members of her family.

19. Mulford's trip is described in Perham's thesis as "a tiring and disappointing experience for Mulford. He was very happy when it ended, and he never went back" (pp. 15-16). Mulford's response supports my contention that, for him, the West was a mythic or aesthetic projection that was most satisfactorily encountered in books.

20. Perham indicates that Mulford often developed fantasies involving guns, which he avidly collected and experimented with. In

1934 when an astronomer friend mentioned the possibility of Mulford's accompanying a scientific team to Borneo, Mulford immediately visualized his role: "... that of camp guard. There are tigers, panthers, leopards, anacondas and scores of venomous snakes in Borneo, not to mention head-hunters" (quoted by Perham in "Reflections on Hopalong Cassidy," p. 27).

21. According to Perham, "Reflections on Hopalong Cassidy," pp. 40-46, Mulford compiled ten thousand handwritten notecards.

22. This occurs in both *Bar-20* (New York: A. L. Burt, 1907) and *Bar-20 Days*.

23. Perhaps Bower's sense of historical change is clearest of all in those novels where filmmakers suddenly turn up on location in ranching country: she seems not only to understand that the reality of western life is becoming a matter of celluloid images but also to welcome the transformation as a source of new ideas for her fiction. *Jean of the Lazy A* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1915) is her most interesting novel in this respect.

24. The wirecutting takes place in *Bar-20 Days*. In contrast, Bower's plots sometimes develop out of the accepted facts of fenced pastures and leased land.

25. Mulford, *Bar-20*, p. 51.

26. Mulford, *The Coming of Cassidy*, p. 149.

27. B. M. Bower, *Lonesome Land* (New York: A. L. Burt, 1912).

28. Mulford, *Bar-20*, p. 74.

29. Mulford's violence may represent an exception to John Cawelti's assertion that "the most important implications" of the "killing procedure" in the western are "the qualities of reluctance, control and elegance which it associates with the hero." See *The Six-Gun Mystique*, p. 59.

30. B. M. Bower, *Chip of the Flying U* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1906), p. 32.

31. Bower, *Jean of the Lazy A*, p. 219.

32. Richard W. Etulain, "The Historical Development of the Western," *Journal of Popular Culture* 7 (Winter 1973): 719.

33. Quoted in Perham, "Reflections on Hopalong Cassidy," pp. 51-52.

34. Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*, pp. 146-47.