



BROWSE



 ***Wild Westerns: Stories from the Grand Pulps* ed. by Bill Pronzini (review)**

Edward C. Lynskey

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviews *Wild, Westerns: Stories from the Grand Pulps*. Edited by Bill Pronzini. (New York: Walker and Company, 1986. 214 pages, \$14.95.) The popularity of the cheaply made, mass-produced pulp magazines peaked between 1920 and 1950. The favorite genre was short fiction about the Old West; over 200 magazines sporting such titles as *Dime Western* and *.44 Western* brought the myth of the frontier to hungry audiences. This anthology reprints twelve of the best and most original stories, demonstrating their considerable literary merit and stylistic varieties. One quality of Western stories was humor reminiscent of Gabby Hayes's fretting or the Marx Brothers' slapstick zaniness. Sophisticated comedy is rarely seen as it is in "A Wollopin' Good Crew" by Thomas Thompson. Another important aspect of pulp stories is seen in Elmore

Leonard's "Law of the Hunted Ones," where the author combines his vivid descriptions of the badlands with the flinty, violent nature of his characters. Not until the post-World War II years did non-whites begin to be portrayed as other than flat characters in disdainful and derogatory roles. "Chivaree," by Frank Bonham, depicts a white wrangler who convinces his boisterous friends to accept his new half-breed bride. The customary six-gun shootout takes an ironic twist in Dan Cushman's "I.O.U.—One Bullet" where a young, upstart lawyer challenges a gunfighter to a duel. The desperado overloads his derringer with powder and the resulting explosion takes off his fingers. The prolific Max Brand's "The Laughter of Slim Malone" is an eerie tale with a surrealistic flavor in which a newly-designated sheriff stalks a ghostly renegade. Here the good guy does not win; the sheriff returns dead, strapped over his mount. The killer's note on the body thanks all for the sport. The goody two-shoes Hopalong Cassidy remembered from William Boyd's B films was not originally cast in that mold. Clarence Mulford in "Hopalong Sits In" shows the legendary name as a crusty, hot-tempered, and colorful cowpuncher who turns a genial poker game into a drunken brawl. Pronzini's selections in this interesting volume represent the most innovative and well written pieces from the vast pool of Western pulps. EDWARD C. LYNKEY Warrenton, Virginia ...

Reviews

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