

THE MYTH OF THE COWBOY AND WESTERNER:  
NAMES IN SOME WORKS BY ZANE GREY

Byrd Howell Granger

As the United States celebrates its bicentennial birthday, the mass of accumulating Americana threatens to cover the purple mountains' majesty. Everything from fife and drum on Bunker Hill to Conestoga wagons is achieving renaissance, and sooner or later, the nation's myth -- that of the cowboy -- will experience review. When it does, it is probable that the nation's most noted writer of western fiction will appear at center stage. He is, of course, Zane Grey, a prolific writer whose cowboys were real because he knew them intimately, and mythical because the writer was not only entrapped in the web of the native American myth, but in fact helped create it.

Zane Grey died in 1939, but his death did not stop the steady flow of "new" books, for although the author was gone, his publishers had a great pile of manuscripts which provided work for the turning presses for the ensuing two decades. Using a lapboard, Zane Grey turned out well over seventy novels and from first to last, his books experienced an eager audience. In the United States, fifty-six million readers kept the

royalties rolling in, whereas in Europe his books sold over thirty million copies.<sup>1</sup> They sold particularly well in Germany, Scandinavia, and Czechoslovakia. It may well be that his works exerted tremendous influence on the burgeoning cult of the cowboy in Czechoslovakia and in France. In 1951 Indo-China harbored copies of Riders of the Purple Sage, which had been translated into Annamese for propaganda purposes.<sup>2</sup> The U.S.S.R. viewed his novels as dangerous propaganda and hence banned Zane Grey from Soviet bookshelves.<sup>3</sup>

Curiously, for the first thirty-eight years of his life Zane Grey was unacquainted with the American West. He was born in a town named for his family, Zanesville, Ohio, in 1872. His mother immediately gave her son cause for concern with personal names: because she liked the new shade of gray, she named her son Pearl Grey, a name he soon shucked in favor of his ancestral family name of Zane.<sup>4</sup>

Quite early, young Zane Grey became a writer of sorts, but his first fiction had such a disastrous result that for ten years thereafter he wrote no fiction whatever. As a member of a teen-age gang which bound its members to blood-brotherhood secrecy about stealing watermelons and chickens, Grey helped plan much more dastardly deeds. The plans led him to write "Jim of the Cave." His earliest fiction, however, went up in flames when a gang member snitched to Zane's father, who larruped his son with a strip of floor carpeting bedecking the gang's cave.<sup>5</sup> Little is known of this early work except that its heroine had light hair and blue

eyes and its villain was magnificently evil, a fact which may have derived from Grey's reading of the complete set of Beadle's Dime Library owned by the gang.

Thereafter Grey evinced little interest in authorship, duly attending and graduating from dental college, after which he headed for New York City. He was there in body, but not in spirit, spending as much time as possible adventuring on fishing and canoeing vacations. His writing career enjoyed a timid beginning in articles about such experiences. A novel, however, was germinating, and in late 1903 he began one about Betty Zane, an ancestor who had saved Fort Henry in the siege of 1782 by "running the gantlet of fire, carrying an apron full of gunpowder over her shoulder."<sup>6</sup> One publisher after another yawningly rejected the completed work. Grey borrowed money and published it himself. Interestingly, it enjoyed acceptable reviews.

Struggling young authors often live from hand-to-mouth. Few do so literally, but Zane Grey did, having been educated as a dentist. More interested in writing than in taking out teeth, he soon abandoned dentistry and the city, moving with mother, sisters, and brothers to the country. He took another great step, marrying Lina Roth, the right woman for him, for her faith never went through even a tiny quiver, although his own flickered badly at times.

Five years passed, and still no publisher showed interest in Zane Grey's work. Fortunately his wife had a little money, not much, but enough to support her husband's endeavors a while longer. His interest

in adventure remained strong. He was intensely excited when the opportunity came for him to meet in person Colonel C. J. "Buffalo" Jones, "the last of the plainsmen." Grey met Jones, a very discouraged and ill man, who must have found the younger man's sincere admiration heartening. Grey left a copy of the privately published Betty Zane with the colonel, and as a result, Zane Grey's life hovered on the edge of abrupt and permanent change. Buffalo Jones agreed to let the hero-worshipping writer write the colonel's life story. As a preliminary, the two men agreed that Grey must travel to Arizona -- on the last of Mrs. Grey's funds -- to live as a western plainsman and buffalo fancier.<sup>7</sup>

The Last of the Plainsmen, the result of the affair, was submitted to Harper and Brothers. Prompt rejection followed. The manuscript went the rounds during a cold winter during which its writer blew on chilled fingers to keep them supple so he could continue to write. He was enamored of the desert, and in 1910 produced his first western romance, The Heritage of the Desert. Back he went with the new manuscript to Harper. When at long last Zane Grey wrote his signature on his first publishing contract, he entered a writing career of producing an almost endless series of western novels, a career destined to stretch twenty years beyond his death. His second major novel came out late in 1910, and between the publication of Riders of the Purple Sage and 1921, it sold a million and a half copies. The majority of critics dismissed Zane Grey's fiction lightly, calling him the 20th century heir of the dime

novel, yet Burton Rascoe of the old New York Tribune on reading the later Wanderer of the Wasteland admitted that Grey's work had a substance which baffled critics while it enthralled readers.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, it will suffice that Zane Grey's fiction appeals little to the sophisticated, that it is admittedly often labored. Further, his plots are well devised and not always obnoxiously obvious. As for characterization, Grey portrays without sculpting, yet manages to leave readers with well defined recognition of major characters. What is more important, Grey's descriptions have an authenticity which evokes the pungency of creosote bush after desert rain, the sound and sight of swirling dust devils, and the taste of the hot sun in a dry mouth. One could do worse than read his most popular novels.

As for names in his fiction, Zane Grey could never be dubbed painstaking. He wrote constantly, in longhand, and almost always without editing. Yet an investigation of names in his work proves rewarding. For the investigation here encompassed a dozen novels served, from the early 1910 work to the later 1937 fiction. It is a truism in connection with Zane Grey to state that their titles may be depended upon to reflect subject matter. Riders of the Purple Sage do exactly that in southern Utah. The 1914 The Lone Ranger, according to its author, embellishes a tale he had heard about such a man. In the same year he published The Light of Western Stars, with a heroine who arrives at midnight via train and sets foot upon the soil of New Mexico by the light of the

brilliant stars. Wanderer of the Wasteland (1920) sets forth the mature years of a loner who does indeed wander through the most desolate country imaginable. Tappan's Burro (1923) contains four stories, the first of which has as its unusual heroine a faithful burro. In the second story, the hero is a handsome and indomitable Crow Indian, who is "The Great Slave" of the chief of another tribe. The remaining two stories take place in Mexico; one is called "Yaqui" after its protagonist member of that Mexican tribe, and the other is a highly unlikely tale about a blind jaguar trained to track and kill humans, quite naturally entitled "El Tigre."

In 1925 appeared the Vanishing American, about two southwestern tribes Grey expected to disappear along with other native American groups. In Stairs of Sand (1928) the immature heroine strives to shed her sinful ways and become a decent woman, with her many failures being likened to attempting to climb stairs of sand, a symbolism which Grey whacks with all the finesse of a bass drummer in a marching band. Nevada (1928) turns out to be, not the name of the state, but one of several aliases of the hero, after whom the novel might just as well have been entitled Texas Jack, Idaho, California, or Arizonie. The Lost Wagon Train (1932) contains a missing wagon long sought and late discovered smashed at the base of a cliff, over which it had been run by the gang of the hero-turned-villain, a nice switch. Majesty's Rancho, judging superficially by its 1937 date, might have had something to do

with royalty taking up cattle raising, but in reality it refers to the ranch of an imperious spoiled brat, whose mother was heroine of the earlier Light of the Western Stars. The last novel to be considered poses a small problem, for it bears two names. Zane Grey published it serially in 1927 as The Water Hole; after his death (1954) it was reissued as The Lost Pueblo.

The only conclusion reached by examining Grey's book titles is that he evinces a pragmatic mind. They mean what they say.

From names of novels one turns to place names in Zane Grey's fiction cited above. The immediate result is a curious contradiction. Grey mingles actual place names with barely disguised place names, plus a smattering of locations named by the author, nor is any pattern discernible as to why the variations occur. Territorial names which existed in Arizona along the Colorado River occur: Ehrenberg, Picacho, the Chocolate Mountains. Some were drawn from places in the southeastern corner of the same state: the San Bernardino Ranch, the Peloncillo range of mountains, the town of Douglas, and in nearby New Mexico, Guadeloupe Canyon. Chief among names barely altered from their actuality are the following: Flagerstown (for Flagstaff), which occurs in both The Vanishing American and in The Water Hole; Kaidab, applied to a trading post, instantly identified by any knowledgeable Arizonan as being the post at Kayenta and probably drawn from the northern Arizona Kaibab Plateau; the village of Copenwashie, which can be none other than Moencopie, a town at the western edge of land assigned to the Hopi Indians.

As for place names Grey devised, apparently the nature of the story dictated their form. For instance, Deception Pass in Riders to the Purple Sage is the entrance to the hide-out of rustlers and outlaws who mingle with others as honest citizens. Further, descriptively the name is suitable, for Grey describes it as a "torturous and many-canyoned way," except that one boxed canyon terminates in an unscalable wall whereon discerning eyes can detect long-unused handholds. Midway up this wall at a minute resting place is a delicately poised boulder, Balanced Rock, and at the top lies an Eden-like paradise termed rather unsurprisingly Surprise Valley. Naturally, the rock is destined to mash pursuers and close off Surprise Valley forever for the benefit of the hero and his lady.

Surveying the place names in a baker's dozen of Grey's novels leads to the surmise that their author followed the fashion of the early 1900's in barely altering known place names. That he did so in 1912 is no surprise, and that he did so in 1927 for the same locale suggests the writer was creating his own Yoknopatawpha country in northern Arizona. As for altering Moencopie to Copenwashie, the author was aware that in The Vanishing American he wrote bluntly about problems of controversial concern wherein the real Moencopie was at the center of a still continuing contention over water, farming rights, and settlement rights between two "warring" tribes.

Of no less interest are the names of characters in Zane Grey's novels. The writer's initial journey to Arizona led him into the

sparsely settled northern reaches of that vast state. It is no surprise, then, that in his earliest western romances the names of characters are close to those of Arizonans. The setting of Riders of the Purple Sage, as already indicated, is in the remotest border settlement of Mormons in southern Utah, and the heroine is Jane Withersteen. Grey knew the Wetherell family which established the trading post at Kayenta on the Navajo Reservation. The names are too close to be truly accidental. The names of other characters echo Arizona and western history with the thin clear sound of pebbles clinking down to canyon floors. Without identifying the novels in which they occur, here are a few, each paired with its possible historical antecedent: Padre Marcos (Fray Marcos de Niza); John Withers, a trader among the Navajo (John Wetherell, first trader in that region); Noki, an Indian (Hopi, or possibly Moqui, which was the Spanish name for the Hopi); Elijah Endicott, a wealthy easterner (Endicott Peabody, wealthy easterner who established the Episcopal church in Tombstone); Clink Peebles (Peebles, settler of what is today Peebles Calley); Jud Smith (Jedediah Smith, early scout and guide, but not in Arizona); Judge Franklidge (Judge Franklin, an esteemed pioneer jurist). On the whole, however, associated names -- if that is what they are -- occur seldom in Grey's fiction.

From first to last, Zane Grey cowboys combine reality and myth. Their dress is that of the working cowboy as he was and largely is: dark shirt and trousers (in that pre-Levi day); neck bandanna; boots,

never fully described but taken for granted except as being termed "high," "low," or "medium-calf" height according to the nature of the country to be worked (high for seed-rich grasses, medium for brushland, and low for open desert); chaps worn only when working thick, harsh chapparal which requires heavy leather to prevent flesh and clothing from being shredded; hats with broad or narrow brim and low or high crown according to the intensity of sunlight or their use as a water pail. And because no cowboy goes ungloved, gloves are taken for granted, being cited only once in the unusual instance of a gunslinger who wore only a left glove so that his right hand would be at the ever-ready.

In names too cowboys and bandits in the "supporting casts" are, like such names today, largely descriptive, arising from place or origin, events, or as diminutives, all truisms of nicknaming. Brick Higgins is red-haired of course. Panhandle Smith needs no explanation. Jackrabbit Benson, writes Grey, has "always got his eye peeled an' his ear cocked." Euchre is a gambling man, and Nels is a Swede. "Danny" serves as a diminutive for the Mexican Manuel, and the novels contain a wagonload of Jims, Tims, and Hanks. All exemplify the myth of the cowboy: they revere good women, are courteous to a fault, taking time for the amenities even when the bullets are flying thick and fast. Noble in their attitudes toward pure women, they have entirely normal responses to the opposite variety, experiencing urges which threaten to overpower them, urges which find ready release with women who sin for cash

and not for charity. These stereotypes restrain their language when with women, who usually induce a tongue-tied state in any event, particularly if the women are young and lovely and innocent. Like righteous gods, these men strike dead those who harm the innocent. No saints, they like to gamble, to enjoy high jinks with the saloon girls. No swaggerers, they crouch slightly, arms loose at sides, as they walk, a curious posture no doubt brought on by the wearing of the inevitable shooting irons. Their palms extend, open, and their keen eyes focus sharply, faces expressionless when they are on the verge of using lead weight to make dead weight of some villainous character.

The portrait is not entirely false. Cowboys did wear guns. More often than not, the guns showed the result of constant wear in fair weather and foul, and few of them were in safe working order. According to Tom Wilson, former mayor of Tombstone who rode the open Arizona range in the early 1900's, a cowpoke would have been "stark nakid" without his boots, hat, bandanna, and gun. The gun, of course, had probably rusted into uselessness except as adornment, and shooting one might make it explode in the owner's hand. If a cowboy headed for town intent on celebration, he might take time to oil up his shootin' iron, but aiming it was academic. If serious shooting had to be done, the citizenry hired a gunman to do the job, appointing him temporary sheriff to lend the affair legality. Such sheriffs were noted for brief terms in office.

Zane Grey was aware that the real shooting was handled by gunmen. His cowboys seldom shoot. For one who does not know the authenticity of this supporter of the cowboy myth, it may come as a surprise to learn that Grey's protagonists are not cowboys, but gunmen, at least in his earlier works. His settings are not always confined to the home ranch or riding the range, nor are his conflicts cowboy-and-Indian affairs. In Riders of the Purple Sage, Lassiter (the hero) is determined to find the Mormon responsible for abducting Lassiter's sister and ultimately causing her premature death. A long and arduous trail has led him to the southern Utah Mormon settlement where he home of an unmarried Mormon woman, Jane Withersteen. Despising Mormon men, Lassiter admires the patient, hard working, gentle Mormon women. He has cause to hate the men, some of whom had blinded his horse with hot irons. By 1976 western mythology, Lassiter should be thoroughly evil, first because he wears black, his horse Black Star is sable hued -- no white for this hero. In the novel, names occur like salt grains flicking from a shaker, but few such names do more than identify. One name, nowever, symbolizes the character, and that is Oldring, leader of the "old" band or rustlers in conflict with the more recently formed Mormons who are, secretly, rustlers. The complicated story concludes with Balanced Rock tipping over like a deus ex machina.

In Lone Star Ranger numerous outlaw cowboys are holed up in a remote valley where young Buck (short for Buckly) Duane joins them,

but he is no deep died outlaw, having killed only one man, for which he has become labeled "the last of the (infamous) Duanes," his ancestors not having been worthy of better appellatives. His doom is part of the western myth: if a man is a gunslinger, he can never escape the fact, for foolhardy men or braggarts will forever seek him out to challenge his supremacy as a bad man.

Interestingly, in presenting gunmen, Grey escapes banality. In this instance, the outlaw leader bears the deceptive name of Bland. The tale is a corking good story, with a chase scene replete with the hero bogging in quicksand, dogs being brought in to find him, and his successful killing of the animals one by one except for the last dog. It finds him, and then occurs one of those Zane Grey twists that help explain his continuing appeal. The fool dog, called Rover, trots on by without so much as a growl. Buck, however, is trapped. How he emerges and becomes a Texas Ranger is for the reader to learn, this paper not being the place for ruining stories. As for other names, there is a bandit-cowboy named Knell, who is killed, and a major older character with the honorary title of colonel, perhaps an echo of Grey's friendship with Col. Buffalo Jones, and there is a horse called Bullet, with a round white spot on its forehead.

Like many an author before and since his time, Grey sometimes turned to writing sequels to earlier works, particularly those which had proved most popular. In 1937, two years before his death, Zane Grey

published Majesty's Ranch as a sequel to the 1914 Light of the Western Stars. The two novels form an interesting contrast, the earlier being a fine example of western romance and the later work emerging somewhat forced in its obvious striving to be "modern." In the 1914 work, an eastern socialite suitably named Madeline Hammond goes west to be herself, doing so in the company of her brother Albert, long ago exiled by his family for his shennanigans. Madeline at the outset is the antithesis of the mythical western girl, but she gradually becomes the stereotype: breezy, frank, tanned, her light gray eyes like crystal "steady, almost piercing" -- a sweet kind girl. At first Madeline is a frightful eastern snob, disdaining the company of her brother's sweetheart, who is the western girl prototype. As for the story, it reflects the contemporary world when Pancho Villa was active and Madero already had become history. The only name of significance in the work arises when Madeline is met in the station by a drunken cowboy who stammers when he realizes who she is, "Not Majesty Hammond?" Her nickname found mirth among the cowhands because of her regal bearing and imperious attitude. The only other name requiring notice is that of Bill Stillwell, an elderly man with a dream of improving his ranch -- something which Majesty's wealth makes fact, and hence he is truly Still-Well.

After the derring-do of The Light of Western Stars the 1937 sequel is somehow sad. Times had changed. America had lost her taste for western romances, or perhaps that is what Grey's publishers told him.

Whatever the cause, Majesty's Rancho obviously seeks appeal by striving to speak with the voice of the free and very uneasy late 1930's. In its predecessor of 1914, love conquered all. Madge married Gene Stewart and a lovely daughter, Majesty, was the fruit of their union. In the sequel Majesty is a travesty of college youth of the late 1920's, flirting outrageously with a variety of men, including a gangster with the improbable name of "Honey Bee" Uhl, who double-deals, trucking booze in one direction and rustled cattle in the other. His using trucks befuddles cattlemen who cannot imagine how their cattle are being taken off the range. Onto the scene rides a knight-like character, Lance Sidway. The fact that Majesty, expelled from college, arrives at the ranch with a coterie of wild college youth is, to put it mildly, a bit thick, not made any thinner by the names of her chums. Dixie Conn is dark, vivacious and almost professionally south'n. Pequita Nelson is olive-skinned, with dreamy sloe-black eyes. Allie Leland has the usual Grey gray eyes and a slim figure. Maramee Joyce, whose object is strictly matrimonial, is a brown-eyed beaut with a bod. Beulah Allen is the roguish redhead of the crowd. Their young men have names which later will look good on somebody's law firm shingle: Nate Salisbury, Rollie Stevens, Barg Hillcote. In that pre-pot age they all drank to excess, with the fellows visiting the local whorehouse during one abandoned evening. Rollie, the cad, attempts to rape Majesty, who for some peculiar reason is standing on a bench at the time, but he manages to leap to safety in the

black of night. Lance, equally oddly, is standing nearby enjoying a smoke all by himself and naturally lingers when things get interesting. She asserts he is an "insufferable cowhand" for such spying. His reply gives her a come-uppance in dialogue which is utterly labored:

"...your splendid father and your loving mother are too damn good for you, Madge Stewart...you don't know what you've put them through."

"Oh! -- Not -- not money troubles?"

"Yes, money!:" he bit out, bending over her.

One is almost relieved when the gangster abducts the girl and slaps her around in approved Jimmy Cagney style. Incidentally, his two henchmen have names unlike the usual Mafia monickers: Raggy and Flemm. The latter's name, however, is suitable.

With relief one closes Majesty's Rancho and turns back to earlier Zane Grey works with their ineffable quality which continues to make them readable despite a viewpoint which dates them. Wanderer of the Wasteland (1920) and Stairs of Sand (1928) share what may well be intentional symbolism, though Zane Grey never took time from his lapboard writing to elucidate. It may, however, be safely said that writers are usually aware of trends in their own time, and it may be that Zane Grey was caught in the contemporary current of symbolism. In both novels, the author is heavy handed and unsure in his symbolism, but it is present.

The symbolism is roughly biblical. Once again the protagonist is an innocent, well intentioned young man forced into exile by inadvertent misdeeds which make him prime quarry for any old posse which may happen that way. The wanderer of the 1920 work is Adam Larey, who at eighteen loves mankind and begins his suffering for its sake, emerging even further as a Christ figure underscored by his forty days in the desert searching for his own soul. Like the first-man Adam, he has killed his own brother -- or so he thinks. During the ensuing years of lonely wandering, he works modern miracles for those in direct need. On his personal Mount Olive, a peak on the Colorado River in the 1850's, he comes to conclusions worth noting. Like an innocent Adam, he seeks his own Eve. The symbolism is confusing, for he also emerges as Cain, for he believes he has murdered his own brother, Guerd (and there's a symbolic name, considering the action of the novel). When Guerd "rises from the dead past" Adam seems like the archangel Michael in his titanic struggles with his satanic brother. The biblical symbolism even extends to Adam's meeting a fisherman -- one Merryvale -- on the river. The fisherman tells Adam the truth about Guerd's being alive, not dead, and Adam's life takes a new direction.

As for Stairs of Sand, it has already been indicated that it is the story of a sinful young woman seeking her lost innocence, and to it is added the results of Adam's vow to save her because he had promised her mother he would do so. The girl's name is Ruth Virey, and certainly she

has something in common with the biblical Ruth, not to mention with John Keats' Ruth "standing alone, amid the alien corn." Like Mary Magdalene, she knows her faults and seeks absolution. Adam is all-forgiving, noting that the girl's mother was named Magdalene. In the mid-1970's casual attitudes toward sex, the notion that Zane Grey's Ruth could be wife in name only to Guerd Larey has a hollow sound. Not so hollowly amusing is the ultimate ruthless rape of Ruth by her husband-in-name-only, for which Adam deals a swift retribution.

Other names in Stairs of Sand contribute clumsy symbolism. With a character named Stone the reader's uncertainty is wiped out by Grey's noting the man has a heart of stone, scarcely an original notion. There is, unfortunately, more of the same. By 1928 the hand of the old master was faltering.

Of the remaining five novels investigated, only three require more than mere mention. Both The Vanishing American and The Water Hole (The Lost Pueblo) are set in northern Arizona. Both refer to contemporary events and both contain interesting onomastic material. The third novel is Lost Wagon Train.

As for The Water Hole, suffice it that its subject is the discovery of a magnificent cliff dwelling, found by another in the long Grey line of spoiled-brat heroines who manage to make it to marvellous American womanhood. The cliff ruin is called Beckyshibeta, surely an approximation of the then newly-named Betatakin. In translation, Betatakin means

"cow-water," and it is possible that fact accounts for the name of the novel -- The Water Hole. The novel is a clumsily farcical tale, a rarity among Grey's works, once again about a brattish college girl with full womanly potential. More modern than her predecessors, she smokes, but vehemently denies her father's allegation that she drinks as her friends do. A cowboy named Mohave meets her when she arrives at her financial wizard father's place at Flagerstown. He was named after the Mohave Desert "which ain't got no beginnin' or end." A cowhand is named Diego, of course a Mexican, and a fancy Dan type: "He seen a Western movie once an' ain't never got over it." Once again the easterners have socialite names like her father's, Elijah Endicott, and that of Albert Durland, a nincompoop suitor in love with her wealth. The love of her life is Phillip Randolph, a rough, tough, and wholly ready archaeologist who is offhanded about her, her beauty, and her wealth. Naturally he is a true blue gentleman to the core. He works in Sagi Canyon, surely an alteration for the name of Tsegi Canyon, a Navajo name which might not trip very lightly from a reader's tongue.

Once again Grey's dialogue is stilted, notably in the post-abduction scene wherein Phil makes his intentions clear. She asks,

"Are you drunk or mad?"

"Both; Drunk with your beauty -- mad for love of you," he replied hoarsely.

She then calls him a "wild west boob," which seems appropriate. The book is funny, both intentionally and otherwise.

The 1925 Vanishing American deals seriously with problems which remain of keen interest fifty years later, for trouble still exists on the Indian reservations of Arizona between self-seeking whites and the Indians. One Nophaie, a Nopah, is the protagonist. A thin veneer does not obscure the fact that Nophaie is equivalent to a Navaho, and his tribal group Nopah is just as thin. The second tribe in the novel is termed Noki and can refer to none other than the Hopi. The story is enthralling, well worth reading if one wishes to understand somewhat the tribulations of southwestern Indians. Those versed in Arizona terrain will recognize where the travels of the persecuted Nophaie take him, despite disguised place names. He goes to a sacred mountain called in the novel Nothis Ahn, a remote, silent, soul-gathering spot beyond the Canyon of Silent Walls with its great arch, surely none other than that magnificent Rainbow Bridge where today; the base lies beneath the waters of Lake Powell, its silence disturbed only by the sound of an occasional outboard motor. Nothis Ahn may be the equivalent of Agathla in Monument Valley. On his journey Nophaie must cross a plateau, Shibbet Taa -- on maps, Shivwits Plateau, north of the Grand Canyon.

Names of characters may or may not be analogous to those of persons alive at the time, but apparently Zane Grey thought to selecting several: Blucher for the dastardly Indian agent who during World War I supports the German cause; Miss Herron, the long necked Indian school dormitory matron, who is continually stretching her long legs to make

speed and trouble for the Indians; Morgan, a pirate of a man; and a good-hearted eastern girl, Marian Warner, a name of still another pioneer Arizona family. Indian names depart from actual names, but retain a distinctly Indian sound. One example will suffice, and that is the name Shoe, belonging to an evil looking half-crippled man believed by his people to be a witch. His name may be a play on words, for he shows cause for them to believe as they do.

Of Zane Grey's early fiction read for this paper, a paucity of onomastic materials exists, but it vanishes in his later novels. In Sunset Pass (1931), for instance, the hero with his nobility almost overwhelms the reader by his name: Trueman Rock, also known to his closest associates as, so help me, True Rock. Unlike an earlier hero who cherished a black horse, True in accordance with the myth of the cowboy rides a white steed. As for others, a man named Gage takes the measure of many a man in the novel, and the heroine, Arny Wund, is a wonder in more ways than one. The significance of names in Sunset Pass is so heavy handed as to cause a hasty retreat from it to the last of Zane Grey's works to be considered, and the reference to it will be brief.

In Lost Wagon Train, the rather villainous hero is a disgruntled southerner, self-exiled by his own pride from his native South during the War Between the States. He had, it appears, wished for a colonelcy with the Confederates, but in the midst of lies and disgrace induced by the tongues of others, what could a man of honor do but depart, heading

toward the setting sun. His name is Stephen Latch, and latch is precisely what he does when he latches onto a gang of evil-doers as willing as he to latch onto the wealth of emigrant wagon trains themselves aiming toward the land of the sunsets for which the West is noted. Stephen Latch's men include Sprall, a wiry little fellow poisonous mean as a desert viper; Waldron, an easterner with a weak face and gloomy eyes, the latter perhaps brought on by his having been caught in the act of bank defaulting; Mandrove, a deserter driven from the ranks of honorable military men, a sallow and sandy mustached malefactor; Creik, transplanted from plantation to western Texas, and in both places a slave driver in every sense of the word; and Black Hand, an outlaw. In addition the cast includes Lone Wolf, lean, mean, and devoted to being an outlaw gunman-cowboy. The gang is assisted in spotting wagon trains by a matchless tracker, an Indian named Hawk Eye, whose evil and designing tribal chief is Satana. Latch's most ardent supporter is a mere stripling of a lad, fair as a girl, with cornflower blue eyes and a face which, when not absolutely expressionlessness is as much a deception as his rather feminine name of Lester Cornwall. How the girl in the story, Cynthia Bowden, falls into the hands of the gang and how the lost wagon is found is a matter for the readers to learn for themselves, but the outcome is of course governed by the code of the mythical cowboy, which by 1931 was firmly entrenched.

Today, when economic pressures and bicentennial matters are in the forefront, it is no wonder that a nostalgia for the past is increasingly evident, mythical though that past may be. A firm part of that nostalgia

is expressed in interest in western romance. No one will be surprised if the fiction by Zane Grey once again puts presses to work, for his well knit stories are action-packed slices of Americana. Today many would find his strong moralizing tone and his pure, pure women somewhat amusing, yet both facets of Grey's work have a distinct appeal. Further, few writers manage to escape the firm matrix of their own times, and there is no reason why readers in 1970 should expect Grey's work to have done so. As far as names in literature are concerned, surely a study of names in Zane Grey's fiction is worthwhile, and in this case it is hoped such a study may prove a suitable way to inaugurate the Third Annual Conference on Literary Onomastics.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sam Boal, "Zane Grey" Writer of the Purple Sage," Coronet (June 1954), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>"More to Come," in "The Talk of the Town," The New Yorker (July 19, 1952), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Boal, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>Boal, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Zane Grey, "Breaking Through: The Story of My Own Life," The American Magazine (July 1934), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Grey, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup>Grey, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>"New York's Awe of the Best Seller," The Literary Digest (March 10, 1923), p. 30.

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