

Zane Grey and James Simpson Emmett

Graham St. John Stott

The Zane Grey who came West in 1907 was, as he later remembered, "singularly young and boyish in impressionable receptiveness."¹ Because of this, his trip was to shape his career. During his several months in the canyonlands of the Utah-Arizona border, he learned on the one hand to love the awesome beauty of the wilderness, and on the other to love James Simpson Emmett; his responses to both were to provide matter for all the novels about Utah that were to follow.

The significance of the one has been generally allowed since Grey's undisputed love for the Western desert resulted in some beautiful descriptions of Utah and Arizona scenes. But the significance of the other has been missed, even though Grey made several references to Emmett in his books, and, in a 1926 article for the *American Magazine*, referred to the Mormon cowboy as "The Man Who Influenced Me Most."² To miss this is to miss a lot about Grey and his fiction, for Emmett was much more to the novelist than the valuable guide and able trail companion who is mentioned in *The Last of the Plainsmen* (1908), *Roping Lions in the Grand Canyon* (1922), and *Tales of Lonely Trails* (also 1922). (Indeed, Grey found his friend to be insufficiently intellectual and flattering to be used on most of his hunting trips in Utah.)³ Emmett was also more than just the model for August Naab in *The Heritage of the Desert* (1910)—though it is well known that he was that. He was rather, as the principal shaper of Grey's views on the Latter-day Saints, the principal inspiration for all of Grey's novels about life in Mormon Utah. As the first of these (*The Heritage of the Desert*) has been seen as the archetype for *all* of Grey's subsequent novels,⁴ and the second—*Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912)—has proved to be one of the most popular Westerns of all time, the Mormon Emmett must indeed be seen as one of the most important influences on Grey's career.

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¹Zane Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," *American Magazine* 102 (August 1926):136.

²Ibid., pp. 52-55, 130-36.

³Zane Grey to Dave D. Rust, 15 February 1911, Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

⁴Ann Ronald, *Zane Grey* (Boise: Boise State University Press, 1975), p. 13; Frank Gruber, *Zane Grey: A Biography* (New York: World Publishing, 1970), p. 86.

Born 28 July 1850 in a covered wagon on the Mormon Trail,⁵ Emmett lived a more than usually active life as a Utah pioneer. When sixteen he left the family home in St. George, and went north to build Fort Hamblin at Mountain Meadows.⁶ On 2 April 1872, he married Emma Jane Lay in Santa Clara and (after a trip to the Salt Lake Endowment House) took her to Hamblin.⁷ The following year they helped lay out the town. At twenty-eight, Emmett was hired to be Superintendent of the Canaan Cooperative Stock Company;⁸ he moved his family to Kanab, purchased fifteen acres of land there,⁹ and became involved in church and community affairs. (In 1888 he was on the Board of Trade; in 1889 he was Marshal.)¹⁰ His residency in Kanab was interrupted for six months in 1881, when he served an LDS mission to the "Southern States."¹¹ It ended in 1891, when he moved to Orderville (about twenty-five miles to the north).¹² Five years later, Emmett moved again, this time to manage Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River for the Mormon Church.¹³ The work there was varied. Emmett operated the ferry, of course, and recommended improvements;¹⁴ but he also worked hard to generate a tourist trade in the area,¹⁵ enjoyed the good land of John D. Lee's old farm,¹⁶ and

⁵Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," p. 52; Hinckley Ward Record of Members, 1913-33, Membership No. 84, Church Archives; Dale L. Morgan, "The Reminiscences of James Holt: A Narrative of the Emmett Company," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 19 (April 1951):163.

⁶St. George [Third] Ward Record of Members, Early to 1905, p. 2, Church Archives; Hazel Bradshaw, ed., *Under Dixie Sun: A History of Washington County* (St. George, Utah: Washington County Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1950), p. 120; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 September 1938, p. 13.

⁷Santa Clara Ward Records of Members, Marriages, 2 April 1872; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 September 1938, p. 13.

⁸Andrew Karl Larson, *I Was Called to Dixie: The Virgin River Basin; Unique Experience in Mormon Pioneering* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1961), p. 243.

⁹Kane County Assessment Roll 1878-80, film copy, Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁰Kanab Stake Manuscript History for 9 September and 9 December 1888, and 8 September 1889, Church Archives; diary of James L. Bunting, 1 September 1881, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Elsie Chamberlain Carroll, comp., *History of Kane County* (Salt Lake City: Kane County Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1960), p. 84.

¹¹Emmett was set apart 10 October 1887, and returned 25 July 1888, according to the Missionary Record Book B, p. 97, Church Archives; however, he could not have left before 3 December 1887, when he was ordained a seventy (Hinckley Ward Record of Members, 1913-33, Ordination No. 204, Church Archives).

¹²Orderville Ward Record of Members, Early to 1906, p. 31, Church Archives.

¹³Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5 February 1896, Church Archives; W. L. Rush and C. Gregory Crampton, *Desert River Crossing: Historic Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1975), pp. 54-59.

¹⁴Journal History for 31 January 1898, p. 2; Rush and Crampton, *Desert River Crossing*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁵Carroll, *History of Kane County*, pp. 170-71.

¹⁶There is a description of Lee's Ferry produce in 1889 in Robert Brewster Stanton, *Down the Colorado*, ed. Dwight L. Smith (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 109.

ranged widely as a cattleman and guide. Indeed, he sometimes ranged too far. He was returning (acquitted) from a trial in Flagstaff at which he had been accused of rustling, when he met Grey in 1907.¹⁷

It was of course no wonder that such a seasoned pioneer of the Mormon frontier should impress Zane Grey. Grey himself listed four ways in which he was affected by Emmett: the Mormon, he told his readers in the *American Magazine*, taught him about bravery, about love for the desert, about kindness to animals, and about endurance—and Emmett could no doubt be discussed under such headings. A more fruitful approach, however, is to see Emmett as a specific inspiration for Grey's Mormon characters: both the heroes and (as an antitype) the villains.

SONS OF THE DESERT

The grounds of Emmett's heroic status were, to Grey, obvious. The Mormon was a "son of the desert"; he had lived his life on the desert and "had conquered it and in his falcon eyes shone all its fire and freedom."¹⁸

Though such an achievement might seem small enough to us, Grey had never before realized that a man *could* be a son of the desert, or that the desert itself could be an experience as well as a place. Overwhelmed by the idea, he at first just celebrated such men in his letters. "I met some real men," he wrote to Edwin Markham concerning his trip to Utah, "men who live lonely, terrible lives as a matter of course...."¹⁹ (He was thinking of Emmett—the Emmett who, he reported in 1926, had endured "loneliness, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, the fierce sandstorm, the desert blizzard, poverty, labor without help, illness without medicine, tasks without remuneration, no comfort, but little sleep, so few of the joys commonly yearned for by men, and pain, pain, always some kind of pain.")²⁰ But then Grey realized that he had struck literary gold, and he decided to immortalize Emmett and his kind in fiction.

In 1910 Harpers published his *The Heritage of the Desert*; "a big novel," Grey delightedly called it, one filled with "the desert,

¹⁷Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," p. 52; Angus M. Woodbury, "A History of Southern Utah and its National Parks," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12 (July-October 1944):192-93; Rush and Crampton, *Desert River Crossing*, p. 57.

¹⁸Grey, *Tales of Lonely Trails* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1922), p. 57.

¹⁹Letter of 7 June [1907?] cited in Kenneth W. Scott, "The Heritage of the Desert: Zane Grey Discovers the West," *Markham Review* 2 (February 1970):11.

²⁰Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," p. 136.

the Mormons, and their relations.”²¹ He was thrilled by his achievement. “I have given to the world the Mormons in a *new and better* light,” he proudly wrote to a friend;²² and anyone familiar with contemporary fiction about Utah and the Saints could not help but agree.²³ At the heart of this tribute to the Mormons was Emmett, thinly disguised as the patriarchal August Naab; in a sense it was his novel. He was to have others.

When *The Heritage of the Desert* proved to be enough of a commercial success for Grey to consider a new work, he again thought of Emmett. He published a juvenile-fiction account of his trip to Utah which was partially told from Emmett’s point of view²⁴—and then he set about writing *Riders of the Purple Sage*. “I think of [the Mormons] as a wonderful people,” he wrote of this project to Dave Rust of Kanab, “and so I shall write of them.”²⁵ Before writing the novel he made a trip to Utah, and visited Emmett.²⁶ And (as we shall see) Emmett influenced the resulting fiction.

When *Riders of the Purple Sage* also proved to be successful (it was published in 1912) Grey, knowing that his friendship with Emmett had supplied him with a formula for writing best-selling fiction, proceeded to write novel after novel describing how men came to be sons of the desert. In those which contain Mormon characters (those that concern us here) the debt to Emmett was unmistakable.

Emmett did not look heroic. “He stood well over six feet,” Gray remembered, “and his leonine build, ponderous shoulders, and great shaggy head and white beard gave an impression of tremendous virility and dignity.”²⁷ Those are impressive looks, but they are not those of a typical Western hero; Emmett was, after all, fifty-seven years old when Grey met him. Only in *The Heritage of the Desert*, therefore, did Emmett appear as himself—“a gray-

²¹Zane Grey to Daniel Murphy, 7 May 1908, in Scott, *The Heritage of the Desert*, p. 11.

²²Zane Grey to E. D. Woolley, 18 October 1908, Church Archives.

²³For contemporary virulently anti-Mormon fiction, see Winifred Graham, *Ezra the Mormon* (London: Everett & Company, 1908), and Charles Felton Pidgin, *The House of Shame* (New York: The Cosmopolitan Press, 1912).

²⁴Zane Grey, *The Young Lion Hunter* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1911), in which the narrator, Dick Leslie, is part Grey and part Emmett. Emmett also shaped the character of the old plainsman, Hiram Bent.

²⁵Grey to Rust, 2 January 1911, Church Archives.

²⁶Grey to Rust, 4 December 1910, Church Archives.

²⁷Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” p. 52.

bearded giant.”²⁸ In Grey’s other Mormon novels characters are shaped according to Emmett’s moral image, not his physique.

That image *was* heroic. Emmett was good, Grey noted, and “he typified all that was rugged, splendid, enduring.”²⁹ He had a “ruling passion forever to minister to the needs of horses, men, and things.”³⁰ His mercy and protection

extended to the outcast and starved Indians, to wanderers of the wasteland who wandered by the ferry, to cowboys and sheep-herders out of jobs. His gate was ever open. Rustlers and horse thieves, outlaws from the noted Hole in the Wall, . . . hunted fugitives—all were welcomed by Jim Emett. [The spelling of the name varies.] He had no fear of any man. He feared only his God.³¹

These qualities, Grey believed, were the fruits of desert life.

Those Mormons who inhabit the desert world of Grey’s novels are, therefore, expected to share those qualities. Usually they do. Trasker, for example (a Mormon farmer in the 1932 *Robbers’ Roost*), is kind and hospitable. Quiet, prayerful, he is accustomed “to loneliness and loving men” (p. 278). Joe Lake, “a noble Mormon” and a cowboy in *The Rainbow Trail* (1915), is brave, loyal and “deeply religious” (pp. 372, 94). He puts the welfare of others before his own. The Beeman boys in *The Man of the Forest* (1920) are “the best and most sober, faithful workers on the ranges” (p. 222); reluctant to speak ill of their enemies, they are resolute in defending both their own rights and those of the heroine. And August Naab, the Christlike Mormon of *The Heritage of the Desert* (p. 256), “prays and hopes and sees good and mercy in his worst enemies” (p. 126). Trusting God and man he is ever the Good Samaritan and never fails to succor “the sick and unfortunate” (pp. 134, 2). “Anything hurt or helpless had in August Naab a friend. Hare [the protagonist] found himself looking up to a great and luminous figure, and he loved this man” (p. 59).

For thirty years Grey consistently attributed such qualities to Mormons. Not surprisingly, therefore, this attitude towards the Saints was also sustained in the supposedly anti-Mormon *Riders of the Purple Sage*. In that novel the heroine, Jane Withersteen, is “the incarnation of selflessness” (p. 260), generously charitable to

²⁸Zane Grey, *The Heritage of the Desert* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1910), p. 1. All quotations from Grey’s novels are identified parenthetically within the text by an obvious abbreviation of the title, and the page number (thus, *HD*, p. 1); references are to the Harper and Brothers first editions.

²⁹Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” p. 53.

³⁰Grey, *Tales of Lonely Trails*, p. 100.

³¹Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” p. 54.

gentile and Saint alike (p. 75). She has a "peaceful and loving spirit" (p. 61), she trusts easily, prays readily—and yet will fight for her heritage when stirred. She is, in short, Grey's ideal woman.

Her character, however, is obviously taken from the same mold as the other heroic Mormons in Grey's fiction. In Jane Withersteen, as in the others, Grey recreated Emmett, his tough, compassionate and spiritual Mormon friend.

The toughness should be emphasized. It was something Grey noticed in Emmett as soon as they met. At first he thought that the Mormon and his sons looked tough just because they all packed guns.³² Soon, however, Grey realized that Emmett's toughness was the result of his life in the wilderness. It was a fierce refusal to yield, which, when linked with a good nature, was the most desirable moral quality of all.³³ It was a wilderness-born responsiveness to the primal urge for life.³⁴

Such toughness as seen in Emmett is, not surprisingly, to be found in Grey's fictional good Mormons (we will come to his Mormon villains shortly). Jane Withersteen *discovers* the "hot, primitive instinct to live" (RPS, p. 178); it is already found and approved in Mormon cowboys like the Beemans in *The Man of the Forest*, or Mormon wild-horse wranglers, such as Utah in *Wild Horse Mesa* (1924). Somehow, these Mormons resemble the desert (WHM, p. 50), and the offer of their companionship forces a man to evaluate his fitness and worthiness for a wilderness life (HD, pp. 193, 128).

Grey was not making here a simple identification of Mormonism with the spirit of the desert. When Jane Withersteen responds to that spirit she has to break with her Mormon community; Naab has to risk violating his religion when the heritage of the desert moves him to avenge his murdered sons. Mormonism, however, was what made the response to the wilderness possible for these characters (and for Emmett): it had brought them to Utah, and though it had molded them in its own ways, it had also molded them "in the flaming furnace of [the desert's] fiery life" (HD, p. 253). It consequently deserved respect. Grey was not, therefore, just interested in Mormon history as a source of "wild adventures"³⁵ (though they certainly did appeal to him). He saw in the Mormon story "the wonder and beauty of a desert

³²Zane Grey to Dolly Grey, 12 April 1907, in Gruber, *Zane Grey*, p. 69.

³³Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," p. 136.

³⁴Grey, "What the Desert Means to Me," *American Magazine* 98 (November 1924):6.

³⁵Grey to Rust, 2 January 1911, Church Archives.

struggle”³⁶ and, without being an advocate for LDS theology, he could sympathize with and admire the Saints as they struggled to live on the ranges of southern Utah. It was of course in Emmett, whom he saw as a modern Ulysses, that Grey found the grounds of his belief that this struggle was worthwhile.³⁷

MORMON-GENTILE CONFLICT

The degree to which Emmett helped Grey see the Mormons as at least potential heroes can be seen in the novelist’s handling of Mormon-gentile conflict. He is (because of Emmett) consistently on the Mormon side, consistently prepared to see the Saints as long-suffering and much abused.

In the historical conflict between the two groups there had been violence. As early as 1881 Mormon springs along the Little Colorado had been jumped as a “reign of terror throughout the mountains” worked itself out.³⁸ Then, in 1883, in both Utah and Arizona, gentile cattle companies started to move in on Mormon land. At Verdure, for example, riders gave the settlers ten days to move out.³⁹ At Monticello the cattlemen diverted the North Fork irrigation water away from the town, and sent out trigger men to ride the ditch.⁴⁰ And south of Kanab B. F. Saunders and his Grand Canyon Cattle Company started to put pressure on Jim Emmett. In 1880 Saunders had bought land in Paroshant Valley: within three years his riders were trying to jump Emmett’s springs at Cane Beds (on the east of Little Buckskin Mountain),⁴¹ and before long the conflict was perennial. In 1907, for example (the year of Grey’s trip to Utah), there were attempts to muscle Emmett out of grazing rights in House Rock Valley, and it was a matter of public speculation as to whether Charlie Dimmick, Saunders’ foreman, would kill Emmett—or Emmett him.⁴²

No doubt because Emmett could be so informative, Grey reproduced this violent atmosphere in his fiction. Cheney, in *Stranger from Tonto* (published posthumously in 1956), undersells the

³⁶Grey to Rust, 4 December 1910, Church Archives.

³⁷Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” p. 136.

³⁸Jesse N. Smith to John W. Young, 2 May 1881, Church Archives.

³⁹C. A. Perkins, comp., *Saga of San Juan* (Salt Lake City: San Juan County Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1950), pp. 93-94.

⁴⁰Perkins, *Saga of San Juan*, p. 99; cf. Charles S. Peterson, *Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing along the Little Colorado River, 1870-1900* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973), p. 170.

⁴¹Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer of the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1975), pp. 521-23.

⁴²Rush and Crampton, *Desert River Crossing*, p. 57; Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” pp. 52, 136.

Mormon ranchers and drives his herds through their land (p. 184). Herrick, in *Robbers' Roost*, buys out the Mormon settlers for a pittance, and then brings in gunmen to ride the range (pp. 16, 57, 66-7). And, in *The Heritage of the Desert*, Holderness has his riders move cattle into Mormon territory by blocking some springs and jumping others; they dispute at gunpoint August Naab's land east of Cococino Mountain.

In *Riders of the Purple Sage* the storm cloud of Mormon-gentile conflict is just about to burst. A change had gradually been coming, Grey writes, "in the peace-loving lives of the Mormons of the border. Glaze—Stone Bridge—Sterling, villages to the north, had risen against the invasion of gentile settlers and the forays of rustlers. There had been opposition to the one and fighting with the other" (3). The situation was grim. "Universal gun-packing and fights every day" were approaching the southernmost Mormon village of Cottonwoods (usually identified as Kanab).⁴³ Saloons, outcasts, and gunmen were beginning to threaten the Mormons' "pastoral" way of life (pp. 127, 4). Almost inevitably, the village "had begun to awake and bestir itself and grow hard" (p. 3).

In all of these novels, it will be noted, Grey sympathized with the Saints as they struggled to keep the desert their own. Emmett's living out of his desert heritage had justified his fictional coreligionists' lives, and given them an opportunity to defend their rights as heroes. His influence on a novelist who was being invited to write anti-Mormon fiction⁴⁴ was obviously considerable; sufficient, certainly, to justify Grey's 1926 accolade.

MORMON VILLAINS

As we might expect, not all of Grey's fictional Mormons act well when faced with this gentile challenge. Grey never naively supposed that all men would be purified by the desert; some, he knew, would emerge from the wilderness just as bad as men like Emmett were good. When tested—by the influx of gentiles, say—some were found to fail.

The failure was not their resorting to violence: the hero can respond violently to his challenge, and still have Grey's approval; he is merely being true to the desert. Rather, the failure is shown

⁴³Utah: *A Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), p. 344; Jay Ellis Ransom, "Mormon Colony on the Paria," *Westways* 45 (December 1953):5.

⁴⁴Grey to Rust, 15 February 1911, Church Archives.

in any action motivated by inadequacy, greed, or lust. Inadequacy, the inability to cope with the demands of Western life, is what makes Belden such a nasty piece of work in *The Young Lion Hunter*. Fired from his job as forest ranger because he was "worthless," he turns to plotting against the gentile who replaced him (p. 109). Greed is what makes merchants, like Jed and Seth Bozeman in *Shadow on the Trail* or Josh Sneed in *Robbers' Roost*, try to "skin the pants off" gentiles who move into town (RR, 30); it is also the cause of Harrobin's downfall (also in *Robbers' Roost*). Harrobin, "wholly governed by passion," concerned about the arrival of large numbers of gentiles in the Mormon community of Pine Valley, moves from punitive raids on gentile cattle to large scale rustling for profit—and a summary execution at the gentile hero's hand (p. 148). Lust, finally, is what motivates Grey's most infamous Mormon villains: Bishop Dyer and Elder Tull of *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Dyer proselytes and then kidnaps Millie Erne to bring her back to Utah to be a plural bride (p. 239). Tull, in his desire for Jane Withersteen, becomes "a binder of women, a callous beast who hid behind a mock mantle of righteousness—an' the last an' lowest coward on the face of the earth" (pp. 177-78).

In making such villains out of inadequate, greedy or lustful men, Grey was not attempting to supply his readers with an anatomy of human evil. He had two other purposes in mind. First, he wanted to show that these men had not gone to the bad because of their religion. All of them are clearly condemned for their moral flaws—and not because they are Latter-day Saints. More than that, however, Grey wanted to show that such men were aberrations from the Mormon ideal (thus Dyer and Tull are specifically condemned for betraying "the power and the glory of a wonderful creed" [RPS, p. 134]) and, as such, are antitypes of Emmett. Emmett would not have been worthless as a ranger. "It [has] been my good fortune to see many able men on the trail and round the camp fire," Grey recollects in 1922, "but not one of them even approached Emmett's class."⁴⁵ Emmett was not greedy: he did not exploit his fellows (rather, Grey reported, he was himself exploited by them);⁴⁶ when, some years before, the Emmett brothers had been at the heart of "a nest of cattle thieves" in Kanab,

⁴⁵Grey, *Tales of Lonely Trails*, p. 87.

⁴⁶Grey, "The Man Who Influenced Me Most," p. 136.

James Simpson had not been one of them.⁴⁷ Nor was Emmett lustful—if his monogamy was anything to go by (and for Grey it probably was).

Because the average reader would not recognize that Grey was finding his Mormon villains wanting by measuring them against a very specific ideal, examples of Emmett-like Mormon virtue are provided in the novels to balance every instance of Mormon vice. Thus, in *The Young Lion Hunter*, as well as the worthless Mormon ranger there are the thoroughly competent Mormon wild-horse hunters (of whom Grey approved).⁴⁸ Jane Withersteen⁴⁹ and Blake are exemplary Mormons set alongside Dyer and Tull in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and in that novel's sequel—*The Rainbow Trail*—Joe Luke is a “noble Mormon” (p. 372) who is contrasted with his less scrupulous peers.⁵⁰ Trasker's gentle kindness in *Robber's Roost* more than compensates for Josh Sneed's corruption. And if, in *Shadow on the Trail*, the Mormons of Pine Mound are corrupt, those of the White Valley Ranch are not. For a final example—August Naab's love, in *The Heritage of the Desert*, covers a multitude of sins. In short, Grey's respect for the Saints (or at least for Emmett) was such that even when the demands of a good story called for Mormon villainy, good LDS characters were introduced to set the record straight. Admittedly they are often merely token characters; but that Grey should make the gesture of including them may well be another sign of Emmett's tremendous influence upon him.

There is yet one more sign: the way Grey wrote about Mormon polygamy. Privately he condemned it as a system which abused and mistreated women⁵¹—and Milt Dale reflects Grey's point of view when he remarks “I never could stomach what I did hear pertainin' to more than one wife for a man” (*MOF*, p. 99). And yet Grey goes out of his way to avoid an anti-Mormon

⁴⁷ Diary of Allen J. Frost, 21 and 23 August and 2 September 1882, and 30 January 1887; Diary of James L. Bunting, 3 and 8 September 1882, Lee Library; Kanab Ward Record of Members, Early, p. 38, Church Archives.

⁴⁸ Grey met with two in 1907: *The Last of the Plainsmen* (New York: Outland Publishing Company, 1908), p. 103; cf. *Wild Horse Mesa*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Frank Gruber noted that she is a representative of the good in Mormonism (see *Zane Grey*, p. 89).

⁵⁰ Emmett cannot be given all the credit for Luke; one of the cowboys in Grey's party to Rainbow Bridge was the Mormon Joe Lee (see *Tales of Lonely Trails*, p. 11). Lee's identity is uncertain, though I suspect he was Joseph D. Lee (1889–1940) a grandson of John D. Lee. See Manriett Henrie, *Descendents of John Doyle Lee* (Provo, Utah: M. Henrie, 1960), p. 559, for scanty details of his life (and the information that a nephew was named Zane).

⁵¹ Zane Grey to Daniel Murphy, 2 June (no year), quoted in Carlton Jackson, *Zane Grey* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), p. 51.

tone in novels which contain polygamous characters, as when he deflects criticism of the institution of plural marriage in *The Man of the Forest*. First he allows a joke on the subject. "Wal, my friend," the polygamous Roy Beeman remarks to the single Milt Dale, "you go an' get yourself *one* [wife]. An' then see if you wouldn't like to have two" (p. 99). The joke is feeble, but it is also slightly *risqué*—and by being so it prevents any protests about Mormon lusts from being taken seriously. Grey follows up on this by having Roy perform the marriage when Milt does get himself a wife—a sure sign in this novel's romantic world that polygamy is not to be taken very seriously as a crime.

Even in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, where polygamy is a crime (or at least where the Mormon attitude towards women leads to criminal acts), Grey refuses to condemn Mormonism out of hand, and is extremely temperate in his invention of villainy. Gentiles *were* driven out of Mormon communities: Grey could not have escaped hearing that. Tull's threat to horsewhip Venters out of town (the morning after a gunfight) was not, therefore, an extreme reaction to the move of gentile violence south.⁵² Mormons sometimes *were* rustlers, as we have seen; a Mormon elder's involvement in cattle stealing, though melodramatic as part of a strong-arm courtship, was hardly without precedent in the real world. Similarly, Dyer's warning that Venters might be hanged or shot—"or treated worse, as that Gentile boy was treated in Glaze for fooling round a Mormon woman" (p. 74), was not a dark fantasy on the author's part. Grey knew that the Mormons were jealous; probably he also knew J. H. Beadle's story of a bishop seizing a rival suitor, having him castrated, and then marrying the distraught girl.⁵³ Even Millie Erne's tragedy was not entirely improbable. Although there is no reason to believe that the Mormons *kidnapped* their plural wives, in the story of Eleanor McLean marrying Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt without troubling to divorce her first husband there is ample evidence that they treated gentile marriage vows in a rather cavalier fashion. "The sectarian priests have no power from God to marry," Eleanor told the *New York World*; "and as a so-called marriage ceremony performed by

⁵²Grey must have heard of the Mountain Meadows Massacre since Emmett had ranched at Mountain Meadows and Lee's Ferry. For an account of the incident, see Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950).

⁵³J. H. Beadle, *Western Wilds and the Men who Redeem Them* (Cincinnati: Jones Brothers, 1878), pp. 351-53, 360-61.

them is no marriage at all, no divorce was needed.”⁵⁴ Everything that happened in the novel (excepting the fast riding and fast shooting) was at least nominally credible.

Such moderation in the story line is interesting. Although *Riders of the Purple Sage* does not contain a hint of approval of Mormon polygamy, its criticism could have been much, much worse. Perhaps Grey moderated his bile because he was beginning to think of himself as a historian of the West (in later years he took that role very seriously);⁵⁵ certainly he did so because of his respect for Emmett. In Grey's tribute to his Mormon friend (*The Heritage of the Desert*), polygamy could have been condemned, but it was not. Though John Hare declines to convert to Mormonism because of his scruples about plural marriage (“I feel differently from you Mormons—about women,” he explains to August Naab), he goes on to say to his polygamous host: “No one could pray to be a better man than you” (p. 294). Such praise trivializes the objection to polygamy—and helps us understand what happens in Grey's subsequent treatments of the theme. Time and again Grey responds to Emmett's spell.

CONCLUSION

Out of respect for Emmett, then, Grey moderated or apologized for Mormon villainy, balanced Mormon evil with good, justified the Saints in their conflict with the gentiles, and created a breed of Western heroes who were sons of the desert like Emmett himself. “I had to love [Emmett],” Grey wrote⁵⁶—and apparently he had to write about him and his way of life over and over again.

As it happened Grey was celebrating a way of life that was past. Even before the first novel had been published Emmett had left his desert home. In 1909, having lost his long fight with Saunders (the LDS Church had sold Lee's Ferry to the Grand Canyon Cattle Company),⁵⁷ he took his family to Annabella, purchased land there, and helped to incorporate the town.⁵⁸ It was

⁵⁴New York *World*, 23 November 1869. See also Steven Pratt, “Eleanor McLean and the Murder of Parley P. Pratt,” *BYU Studies* 15 (Winter 1975):225–56.

⁵⁵T. K. Whipple, *Study Out the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), p. 20.

⁵⁶Grey, “The Man Who Influenced Me Most,” p. 136.

⁵⁷Rush and Crampton, *Desert River Crossing*, p. 58.

⁵⁸*Utah Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Salt Lake City: R. L. Polk, 1914–15); Ruby E. M. Hooker, “Annabella,” in *Thru the Years: Sevier County Centennial History* (Richfield, Utah: Sevier County Centennial Committee, 1947), p. 99; James S. Emmett to E. D. Woolley, 14 October 1910, Church Archives.

enough for Grey, however, that such a life had once existed. By the time Emmett died (in Hinckley, in 1923),⁵⁹ Grey had published several tributes—direct and indirect—to the man he had loved. Their number, their range, and their typicality amongst Grey's fiction are evidence that Emmett was indeed the man who influenced him most.

⁵⁹Hinckley Ward General Record 1923, p. 969.