

Mormon Literature: Progress and Prospects

By Eugene England

This essay is the culmination of several attempts England made throughout his life to assess the state of Mormon literature and letters. The version below, a slightly revised and updated version of the one that appeared in David J. Whittaker, ed., *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995), 455–505, is the one that appeared in the tribute issue *Irreantum* published following England's death.

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This, the single most comprehensive essay on the history and theory of Mormon literature, first appeared in 1982 and has been republished and expanded several times in keeping up with developments in Mormon letters and Eugene England's own thinking. Anyone seriously interested in LDS literature could not do better than to use this visionary and bibliographic essay as their curriculum.¹

EXPECTATIONS

MORMONISM HAS BEEN called a “new religious tradition,” in some respects as different from traditional Christianity as the religion of Jesus was from traditional Judaism.² Its beginnings in appearances by God, Jesus Christ, and ancient prophets to Joseph Smith and in the recovery of lost scriptures and the revelation of new ones; its dramatic history of persecution, a literal exodus to a promised land, and the building of an impressive “empire” in the Great Basin desert—all this has combined to make Mormons in some ways an ethnic people as well as a religious community. Mormon faith is grounded in literal theophanies, concrete historical experience, and tangible artifacts (including the Book of Mormon, the irrigated fields of the Wasatch Front, and the great stone pioneer temples of Utah) in certain ways that make Mormons more like ancient Jews and early Christians and Muslims than, say, Baptists or Lutherans.

Mormonism is also growing rapidly, with the highest convert rate in the United States among religious groups larger than 1 million, and now has over 4 million members in the United States.³ Harold Bloom, the distinguished literary and cultural critic, has recently noted Mormon group cohesion and growth in numbers and accompanying economic and political power (p. 90) and praised what he sees as its unusual theological power because of Joseph Smith's restoration of ancient insights into the eternal and divine nature of the self (p. 105). He identifies Mormonism with

“the American Religion” (p. 111) and predicts that it will soon become the equivalent of a state religion in some parts of America (p. 263) and will assume major world-wide influence and power in the twenty-first century (pp. 263–65).⁴

Such a religion might well be expected to produce a characteristic, good, possibly even great, literature—at least among its predominant cohesive group of literate members, who at this point, for historical reasons, are English-speaking. These now total nearly five million, a larger audience, and one more coherent in powerful theological beliefs, mythic vision, and unique cultural and religious experiences than the audiences for which Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton wrote—indeed, larger and more coherent than that available to any English or American writer until the middle of the nineteenth century.

A distinguished literature has, in fact, long been expected by Mormons themselves—even prophesied by their leaders. As early as 1857, with the Church less than thirty years old and most Mormons living at a subsistence level just ten years after the forced trek into the Great Basin wilderness, Apostle and future Church president John Taylor promised that “Zion will be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind. . . . God expects Zion to become the praise and glory of the whole earth, so that kings hearing of her fame will come and gaze upon her glory.”⁵ Only thirty years after that, as part of his effort in the late 1880s to encourage creation of a “home literature” that would be by, about, and for the edification of Mormons, future Apostle Orson F. Whitney prophesied, “We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own. . . . In God’s name and by His help we will build up a literature whose top shall touch heaven, though its foundations may now be low in earth.”⁶

However, nearly ninety years later, another Apostle, Boyd K. Packer, quoted Whitney and expressed regret that “those foundations have been raised up very slowly. The greatest poems are not yet written. . . . The greatest hymns and anthems of the Restoration are yet to be composed. We move forward much slower than need be.”⁷ The next year LDS Church President Spencer W. Kimball, in a special issue of the *Ensign* (the official Mormon magazine) devoted to the arts, expressed similar disappointment but also continuing expectation:

For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the Restoration, the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter-reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith, of whom we sing “Oh, what rapture filled his bosom, For he saw the living God.”⁸

It is remarkable that what many see as the first major blossoming of a mature Mormon literature commenced about the time of these two addresses by Elder Packer and President Kimball. It is also remarkable that the issues they raised or implied about why the prophesied success had come so slowly have continued to be central to critical debates among Mormons about the nature and quality of their writers’ literary heritage and contemporary achievement. Just three years later, at

the Church's sesquicentennial in 1980, I was able to celebrate what I called "The Dawning of a Brighter Day,"⁹ citing a relative outpouring in the late 1970s of personal essays, dramas, and collections of poetry and fiction of increasing quality. Since then the growth in quantity of Mormon literature published (especially fiction), in readership, in publishing outlets, in critical essays and anthologies, and in participation in Mormon literature classes has been steady—and there has been, in my view, a steady increase in *quality* of writing as well.

But not everyone agrees. Richard H. Cracroft—who could be called the father of modern Mormon literary studies for his pioneering work in the early 1970s in producing the first anthologies¹⁰ and starting the first Mormon literature classes—has strongly objected to the recent directions in most Mormon literature as being too imitative of flawed contemporary critical and moral trends and thus untrue to Mormon traditions and values.¹¹ In this concern, he echoes the warning and counsel of Elder Packer to Mormon artists in 1976 that too many "want to please the world" or to "be in style," and so our artistic heritage grows "ever so gradually." Elder Packer continues: "Our worship and devotion will remain as unique from the world as the Church is different from the world. Let the use of your gift be an expression of your devotion to Him who has given it to you."¹²

At the same time, critics like Bruce W. Jorgensen have called for a Mormon literature that is distinguished not so much by specific doctrinal content and didactic purposes as by its powerfully conveyed love of the world God has given us and by its unusual hospitality to diversity of both content and style.¹³ This stand seems to me consonant with President Kimball's call in 1977, cited above, for literature that includes the full range of Mormon experience: "struggles and frustrations; apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions . . . counter-reactions . . . persecution days . . . miracle man . . . rapture." Certainly one explanation for the general failure of Mormon literature to fulfill its expectations was that it had remained too timid, too narrowly conventional. It had been satisfied with the safe middle ground of experience and with the non-risk-taking authorial voice, so it was not courageously dealing with the extremes of "apostasy" and "rapture" that President Kimball seems to be calling for.

These two emphases—Elder Packer and Richard H. Cracroft calling for a quality of devotion, spirituality, and focus on the purposes of the restored Church and the fundamentals of the restored gospel, and President Kimball and Bruce W. Jorgensen inviting generous and realistic response to the full range of worldly and other-worldly experience—seem to me compatible, though not easily so. They provide the major poles of current critical discussion in Mormon letters and the major rubrics for describing what seems central to Mormon literature at present and throughout its history.

ISSUES

THE DEBATE PRESENTLY articulated most forcibly by Cracroft and Jorgensen has continued for at least twenty years. In 1974, in the introduction to their landmark

anthology, Cracroft and his coeditor, Neal Lambert, wrote, “Readers must never forget that for the Latter-day Saint, his church, as the Doctrine and Covenants declares, is ‘the only true and living church on the face of the whole earth,’ and a literature, or a criticism of a literature, which fails to examine Mormonism on these terms is not only unfair, it is futile.¹⁴ That same year, Karl Keller, in a roundtable in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* on Mormon literature, claimed that “more alarming than the paucity of qualified works of fiction in the Church is the lack of fictional exploration of the theology itself. Mormon fiction is by and large jack-fiction; it does not live by the principles of the Church. . . . With few exceptions the more removed a work of Mormon fiction is from orthodoxy, the better its art . . . , and the more narrowly orthodox its point of view, the poorer its art.”¹⁵

Keller’s trenchant metaphor, “jack-fiction,” captures the paradox at the heart of this debate: everyone wants literature that is uniquely Mormon, even “orthodox”—but also good, that is, skillful and artful; the problem is that focusing on either quality seems to destroy the other. “Jack-fiction” derives from “jack-Mormon,” in modern times the term for someone attached, even very strongly, to Mormon culture and sometimes quite “orthodox” in moral behavior, but not really conversant with or deeply committed to the theology or an “active” participant at Church. Most Mormon literature to 1974 had both failed to be good literature and had been only superficially Mormon—especially, Keller says, that which had *tried* to be most orthodox. The solution, he urged, lay in learning our own theology and dramatizing it effectively on the model of Flannery O’Connor, whom Keller quoted at length:

I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that.¹⁶ The good novelist not only finds a symbol for feeling, he finds a symbol and a way of lodging it which tells the intelligent reader whether this feeling is adequate or inadequate, whether it is moral or immoral, whether it is good or evil. And his theology, even in its most remote reaches, will have a direct bearing on this. It makes a great difference to the look of a novel whether its author believes that the world came late into being and continues to come by a creative act of God, or whether he believes that the world and ourselves are the product of a cosmic accident. . . . It makes a great difference whether he believes that our wills are free, or bound like those of the other animals.¹⁷

Keller ended his call for a genuinely faithful Mormon literature by predicting, “When someone becomes capable of creating imaginative worlds where Mormon theological principles are concretely true, then we will have a writer of the stature of Flannery O’Connor. Because she was a Catholic, she said, she could not afford to be less than a good artist.”¹⁸

Twenty years later, Keller’s conditional prophecy, as well as those of Elder Whitney and President Kimball, are, I believe, beginning to be fulfilled—in the work of Orson Scott Card, Levi S. Peterson, Terry Tempest Williams, Margaret Young, and many others. Before discussing them I will describe some of the theological foundations for these fine Mormon writers’ work and review their literary heritage.

RESOURCES

KELLER SUGGESTED THAT Mormon writers, to achieve the theological literacy needed to create their unique imaginative worlds, should read Sterling M. McMurrin's *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), which Keller calls "essentially an outline of aesthetic possibilities of Mormon articles of belief."¹⁹ Though McMurrin, who builds on the work of B. H. Roberts,²⁰ whom some consider Mormonism's finest historian and theologian, does in fact provide a concise organization of what is most dramatic and unusual in Mormon thought, others could be added: Joseph Smith himself, especially the King Follett Discourse;²¹ Doctrine and Covenants 88 and 93; 2 Nephi 2 and Alma 42 from the Book of Mormon; Brigham Young, in such sermons as "The Organization and Development of Man";²² John A. Widtsoe; Joseph Fielding Smith; Hugh B. Brown; Spencer W. Kimball; Lowell Bennion; Truman Madsen; Margaret Toscano; Blake Ostler; Melodie Moench Charles; Janice Allred; and many others.

In such places are revealed and explored central Mormon ideas that are able to nourish a great literature. All human beings are fundamentally uncreated, noncontingent intelligences with infinite potential, literally gods in embryo. Like God, we are indestructible but bound forever in a real environment of spirit, element, and other beings that both limit and make demands on us and also make genuine joy and eternal progression possible, as we learn to understand that environment and relate in love to those beings. Freedom is not an illusion but is of tragic proportions: God did not make us or the world out of nothing and cannot force salvation upon us, and thus our choices have real consequences for good and evil. Therefore, Christ's Atonement is a paradox, involving a fortunate fall: each of us *must* lose innocence, experience opposition and sin, struggle with justice and our guilt, before we will let Christ's mercy break the bonds of justice within us and satisfy the demands of God's justice in our consciences so we can have the strength to develop in the image of Christ. Eternally separate and impenetrable as each of us is, we cannot realize our fullest nature and joy except in the fully sexual unity of an eternal marriage—an idea, together with the divine equality of the sexes, given the very highest status in the unique Mormon understanding of God being God only in the male and female oneness of Heavenly Parents.

Such ideas can be, and sometimes have been, reduced to a formal creed that tempts Mormon writers toward didacticism, but they are also an extraordinarily rich and sufficient resource—taken together with the dramatic and mythically powerful Mormon history and the ethically challenging opportunities and demands of activity, covenant-making, and charismatic experience in the Mormon lay church—for empowering the imaginative worlds of Mormon literature.

Mormon writers, then, certainly have at hand sufficient *matter* with which to produce a great literature. But does Mormonism also provide insight into the values—and limitations—of the *means* of literature: language, form, style, genres, critical perspectives? From the beginning, Mormons have produced many of their

writings, including some of their best, in forms that until fairly recently have been called subliterate and generally dismissed by formalist critics: diaries, letters, hymns, sermons, histories, and personal essays. In the last twenty years, poststructuralism and various forms of ethical criticism have helped us see beyond such distinctions and provided tools for identifying and appreciating the different but equal values of all kinds of literature. In 1974, Cracroft and Lambert unapologetically filled half of their anthology with early Mormon work in unusual genres, much of which they had recovered through their own research, and they provided useful original attempts at evaluation of these genres in their introductions and notes. Partly in response to that anthology came my own belated conversion from my training in formalism to an appreciation of the literary power in unusual forms, and I began to try to develop new tools of appreciation.²³

Mormon academic critics have been trained in and make use of all the modern theoretical approaches, from the New Criticism of the 1940s and 1950s to the post-modernism that has developed since the late 1960s,²⁴ and no systematic criticism has emerged that successfully identifies Mormonism with any one theory of language or poetics.

Mormon theology, in fact, encourages a remarkable and fruitful openness in relation to current controversies about the nature and power of language—and thus of human thought and literature. On the one hand, poststructuralists find much that is congenial in the Mormon sense of an ongoing, continually developing universe in which God is a genuine and nonabsolute participant, himself in important ways a creature of language and its limitations. Doctrine and Covenants 1:24 informs us that God definitely speaks to us through his prophets but does so “in their weakness, after the manner of their language,” which seems to be consistent with contemporary ideas about the way language always functions relative to the world view and rhetorical resources of the speaker and the discourse community, and there is no way to get “outside” of nature and language for an absolute and therefore universally compelling “meaning.” Doctrine and Covenants 93:24 further suggests that “truth is *knowledge* of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (emphasis added), which can be understood as meaning that truth as we know it is always relative to the knowers involved, a position central to the thought of post-modern philosophers and literary critics.

On the other hand, in the “King Follett Discourse,” Joseph Smith refers to “chaotic matter—which is element and in which dwells all the glory.”²⁵ I understand this to mean that God and humans can bring order from a pluralistic chaos that is potent, genuinely responsive to our creative powers embodied in mind and language. Because God created the world that we know from such a potent chaos and because his mind and ours can make connections to each other and to the world through the powers of language, we can create metaphors that closely *imitate* experience but also increase our ability to *understand* experience. Language is ultimately tragic, because it cannot perfectly embody or communicate reality, but it is all we have and we had better respect it for what it can do.

A Mormon theory of language, then, can accede fully neither to a naive platonic realism nor to an absolute postmodern nominalism. It is based in —faith that God

is like us, personal, embodied, creative, and language-using, closely related in mind and feelings and sufficiently expressed in our organic, changing universe to be understood, at least in part, and to be trusted; faith that while language is limited and relative, it is not merely an ephemeral human creation or an ultimately meaningless game to occupy us until final doom, but rooted ontologically and shared by God.²⁶

A truly Mormon literature would stand firm against secular man's increasing skepticism about the efficacy of language to get at the irreducible otherness of things outside the mind, to make sense, and beauty, of that "chaotic matter which is element." If Mormon writers take seriously the fact that language is a gift from God, the creator, that gives them access to the "glory" that dwells in matter and in other intelligences, including God's, they can confidently use language, not like others merely to imitate (albeit with compassionate despair) the separated, meaningless, raw elements and experience of a doomed universe, but to create genuinely new things, verbal structures of element and intelligence and experience that include understanding and judgment as well as imitation and empathy. We can, like our contemporaries, create of words what Wallace Stevens called "things that do not exist without the words," but we can do so without his undermining fear that what he was doing was merely an ephemeral human activity, a game to occupy until final doom; we can be sustained by the faith that what we are doing is rooted ontologically and shared by God.

In other words, there should be in Mormon writers a special respect for language and form, attention to its tragic limitations but also to its real possibilities. This would mean, I would think, a rather conservative respect for proven traditional forms, until they are genuinely understood and surpassed. At least it would mean unusual resistance to the flight from form, from faith in language, toward obscurity and proud assertion of the purely personal vision that afflicts so much writing in our time.

HISTORICAL PERIODS

MORMON LITERATURE CAN be divided usefully into four periods:

1. **Foundations, 1830–80.** An initial outpouring in the first fifty years of largely unsophisticated writing, expressive of the new converts' dramatic, symbolic, as well as literal journeys to Zion and their fierce rejection of Babylon, and often intended to meet the immediate and practical needs of the Church for hymns, sermons, and tracts.
2. **Home Literature, 1880–1930.** The creation, in the next fifty years, of a "home literature" in Utah, highly didactic fiction and poetry designed to defend and improve the Saints but of little lasting worth—and also the refining of Mormon theological and historical writing, especially in James E. Talmage and B. H. Roberts, into excellent and lasting forms.
3. **The Lost Generation, 1930–70.** A period of reaction, by third- and fourth-generation Mormons, usually well educated for their time, to what they saw as the loss of the heroic pioneer vision and a decline into provincial materialism,

which impelled an outpouring of excellent but generally critical works, published and praised nationally but largely rejected by or unknown to Mormons. Most of them wrote from “exile” outside of Utah, hence the comparison with American literature’s “lost” generation of Hemingway, Stein, and other expatriates.

4. **Faithful Realism, 1960–present** (overlapping somewhat with the previous period). A slow growth and then flowering from the 1960s to the present of good work in all genres, combining the best qualities and avoiding the limitations of most past work, so that it is both faithful and critical, appreciated by a growing Mormon audience and also increasingly published and honored nationally.

Historical Period One: Foundations (1830–80)

IT SEEMS VERY important, when discussing Mormon literature, to remember that Mormonism begins with a book. The Book of Mormon has been vilified and laughed at by other Christians and ignored by literary scholars and critics, but it is now published in over eighty languages, over five million copies a year, and has changed the lives of millions of people. Most of these people do not think of it as *literature*, but it has the verbal and narrative power, linguistic and historical complexity, ethical and philosophical weight, and mythic structure of a great epic.

It was a non-Mormon professor of literature, Douglas Wilson, who twenty-five years ago pointed out the scandalous neglect of the Book of Mormon by the American literary establishment,²⁷ and that neglect still continues, even in our postmodern age of canon expansion and theoretical attempts to value all writing. But Mormon scholars have made important strides both in explicating the historical and cultural substance of this rich work²⁸ and in applying various forms of literary analysis to the text itself. Especially important so far have been the work of John W. Welch on the ancient Hebraic poetic form of *chiasmus* in the Book of Mormon, Bruce Jorgensen on the powerful archetypal structure of the book, and R. Dilworth Rust, who has completed a book entitled *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon*.²⁹

Joseph Smith was involved, as author or translator, in much besides the Book of Mormon, and much of that other work is also of high literary merit. Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants such as 19, 76, 88, and 121, and his accounts of his first vision have been appreciated as fine literature as well as scripture.³⁰ His literate and very forthcoming letters and diaries have been definitively edited,³¹ as have reports of his sermons. The sermons, recorded from memory or in longhand, are quite fragmentary and unrevealing of his literary power, except for the remarkable “King Follett Discourse,” which is by far the most fully recorded and also the most doctrinally innovative.³² Because of the advent of shorthand, we have a much fuller record of the unusually practical and personal tradition of pioneer orators influenced by Joseph Smith, especially Brigham Young.³³

Early Mormons, like their mainly Puritan forebears, were both anxious about their salvation and moved to record evidence of their joy and success in finding it. In addition, Mormon theology inclined them to think of themselves as eternal, uncreated,

and godlike beings, coming here to mortality from a premortal existence to continue working out their salvation in fear and trembling. They were encouraged by Church practice and frontier American culture to bear witness both publicly and privately about their hardships, feelings, and spiritual experiences and to take interest in their individual selves and sense of creation of those selves—so they produced, at great effort and in amazing detail, diaries and personal reminiscences.³⁴

Good examples of the journals, showing a wide range of sophistication and experiences, are Wilford Woodruff's nearly daily record of over sixty years,³⁵ which provides both a rich source of ecclesiastical and cultural history and also intimate insight into the development of an Apostle and Church president; Eliza R. Snow's "Trail Diary," our best source for the horrendous crossing from Nauvoo to Council Bluffs after the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and of the unique spiritual outpourings to the women there during the winter and spring of 1847;³⁶ George Laub's down-to-earth record of the momentous events of Nauvoo and the costs of discipleship for ordinary members;³⁷ Mary Goble Pay's reminiscence of the 1856 handcart tragedy, uniquely moving in its understated purity, which demonstrates how the character of an untrained narrator and powerful events honestly recorded can combine to produce great writing;³⁸ and the witty, detailed, and poignant diary of Joseph Millett, covering both his 1853 mission as a teenager to Nova Scotia and his later life as a settler in Southern Utah and Nevada.³⁹

Similar qualities often come through in the letters as well. Like diaries, letters provide the revealing ethical context of spontaneous, unrevised thought and day-by-day decision making and living with consequences, as well as unequalled directness. Such directness often makes diaries and letters "truer" than the usual histories, which can be falsified by generalization—and are valuable, even understandable, only when we see in them what Stephen Vincent Benét called people's "daily living and dying beneath the sun."⁴⁰

There were also some significant achievements in traditional literary forms in the first period. Eliza R. Snow was an accomplished versifier before she converted to Mormonism but she turned her talent to long, didactic poems about Mormon history, leaders, and beliefs. She also produced some fine short lyrics and a number of hymns.⁴¹ The poems were published in two volumes, 1856 and 1877,⁴² and the hymns are still a highly valued part of the Mormon hymnal, especially "O My Father," which states the unique Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother.⁴³ One other volume of poetry was published during this period, John Lyon's *The Harp of Zion: A Collection of Poems, Etc.* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), and other fine hymns were written by W. W. Phelps and Parley P. Pratt.⁴⁴

The first Mormon fiction, as well as some of the most important and literate early tracts,⁴⁵ was also written by Pratt. His "Dialogue between Joseph Smith and the Devil," first published in the *New York Herald* in 1844, is, though mainly a didactic effort to improve the Mormon image and teach some doctrine to its gentile audience, very witty and imaginative in its setting, argument, and lively dialogue. His *Autobiography*, edited and published in the 1870s, long after his death, and still popular in reprints today, has sections that are carefully shaped, self-conscious personal narratives much like good short stories; and some passages, such as his description

of Joseph Smith rebuking the guards in Liberty Jail, rise to great eloquence.⁴⁶

However, though there is evidence that Mormon pioneers read fiction, even during their treks, Church leaders in this first period regularly denounced the reading of novels as a waste of time and worse, the encouragement of “lies,” recommending instead sermons and histories, which dealt in truth.⁴⁷ George Q. Cannon blamed novel reading for many of the evils which prevail in the world,⁴⁸ and the best Brigham Young could say is that he “would rather persons read novels than read nothing.”⁴⁹ Such reservations were understandable in the day of cheap novels flooding Utah after the coming of the railroad and few great classics yet available. But in the 1880s some Mormon leaders began, with both exhortation and example, an important movement to solve the problem by encouraging and creating fiction—and drama, poetry, and essays—that explicitly set out to teach Mormon faith and doctrine.

Historical Period Two: Home Literature, 1880–1930

IN 1888, ORSON F. Whitney, popular poet, essayist, and bishop of a Salt Lake City ward, expressed hope for a fine and virtuous “home literature” and then continued to try to fulfill his own hope.⁵⁰ He spoke to the Mormon youth, who, as the first generation raised in the Church, lacked their own direct conversion experience. He saw these youth as declining from the faith of their parents and vulnerable to the Protestant missionaries who were beginning to proselyte in Utah. He was joined by other leaders, such as B. H. Roberts, Emmeline B. Wells, and Susa Young Gates, and the result was a virtual flood of moralistic and faith-promoting stories that became the staple of Church periodicals like the *Juvenile Instructor*, the *Contributor*, the *Woman’s Exponent*, the *Utah Magazine*, and the *Young Woman’s Journal*. Such stories have continued to appear in nearly every issue of twentieth-century official magazines like the *Improvement Era*, the *Relief Society Magazine*, the *Children’s Friend*, and their successors down to the present.

Poets like Josephine Spencer⁵¹ and Augusta Joyce Crocheron published didactic and narrative poems, Charles Walker recited his Southern Utah folk poetry, and Elder Whitney published hymns, lyric poetry, and a book-length poem, *Elias, an Epic of the Ages* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904). Susa Young Gates published a fairly successful novel (*John Stevens’ Courtship* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909]), and B. H. Roberts wrote a novel that was turned into a play performed on Broadway in New York.⁵² But the most able, prolific, and lasting in influence of the early “home literature” writers was Nephi Anderson.

Anderson’s novel *Added Upon* (1898),⁵³ though the author himself recognized its limitations and revised it twice, well fulfills his own stated criterion in an essay on “Purpose in Fiction”: “A good story is artistic preaching.”⁵⁴ The novel follows a woman and a man and their friends from the premortal existence through mortal life and into the postmortal spirit world, showing how their love is promised before birth and subjected to earthly vicissitudes but resolved by marriage within the restored Church, then depicting their reunion and resurrection after death. Versions of this formula were immensely popular and have endured to the present in musicals

like Doug Stewart and Lex De Azevedo's *Saturday's Warrior* (1974) and Carol Lynn Pearson's *My Turn on Earth* (1977). Anderson's novel, though not his best, was the only fiction of the original home literature movement that continued to be read by a sizable Mormon audience, with some readers down to the present.

A number of works of nonfiction written during the period, because of their intellectual and literary excellence as well as their orthodox and faith-promoting power, have continued to be valued and carefully read, such as the didactic biographies of Joseph Smith by George Q. Cannon and John Henry Evans. B. H. Roberts published stimulating, powerfully imaginative and persuasive theology (for example, *Joseph Smith the Prophet-Teacher* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing, 1908; reprint, Princeton, N.J.: Deseret Club of Princeton University, 1967]) and history (for example, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930]) that dramatically but with amazing scholarly objectivity organized the thought of Joseph Smith and retold the history of the Saints in the Church's first century. James E. Talmage, an Apostle, wrote two books, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899) and *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), that combine intellectual power with stately, moving personal testimony, and have justly achieved almost scriptural status among Latter-day Saints.

The forms and formulas of home literature that were developed in this second period continue into the present as the kind published and encouraged by the official Mormon outlets (the *Friend*, *New Era*, and *Ensign*, and Deseret Book) and also those, like the *Latter-day Digest* and *Bookcraft*, which aspire to wide and near-official acceptance by Church leaders and general Mormon readership. Richard H. Cracroft has led the way in arguing that the future of Mormon literature depends on writers learning from Nephi Anderson's "steady progress from artless dogma to gently dogmatic art"⁵⁵ to produce a steadily more sophisticated and artful work that is still, in its direct focus on Mormon moral and spiritual values, essentially didactic.⁵⁶ But others feel that primary emphasis on the didactic, on *teaching* through literature, is paradoxically what keeps Mormon literature from being either excellent artistically or powerful morally and spiritually.

Didacticism vs. Description

FROM the Roman writer Horace through English critics Sir Philip Sidney and Samuel Johnson to noted twentieth-century Americans like Yvor Winters and Wayne Booth, most students of literature have recognized that literature inevitably has a problematic, integrated dual purpose and effect—to teach as well as delight—and even that all discourse is fundamentally an attempt to persuade.⁵⁷ Most have also understood that the more direct and conscious the effort to teach, the less delightful the literature and less likely it is to succeed in persuading. On the other hand, great writers who seem to *begin* with no other purpose than telling a good and honest story, or interesting and complex characters—or merely powerful images and affecting rhythms and sounds—end up moving us into whole new dimensions of moral understanding and religious experience. In 1969, Karl Keller argued:

A great work of *Mormon* literature will be like all great works of literature; it will be one that makes me wrestle with my beliefs and which stimulates me by the example of the author's own effort to re-create my own life on surer grounds of belief. . . .

Perhaps when we realize that literature cannot be written or read in the service of religion but that like religion it is an exercise in otherness, an exercise in faith, an exercise in renewing our grounds of belief, *then* we will have an important body of Mormon literature.⁵⁸

Similarly, in 1980, Bruce Jorgensen, drawing on the criticism of Wayne Booth and Sheldon Sacks, made a persuasive case that morality is most authentic and thus convincing, not in the direct preaching of an "apologue" but in the inevitable hundreds of small decisions a moral *author* makes in the process of writing a realistic "action."⁵⁹ Orson Scott Card, one of the most able as well as successful contemporary Mormon writers, provided personal confirmation of Jorgensen's thesis when he announced in 1985 that he had long before resolved never to

attempt to use my writing to overtly preach the gospel in my "literary" works. . . .

The most powerful effects of a work emerge from those decisions that the writer did not know he or she was making, for the decision simply felt inevitable, because it was right and true. . . . [E]very human being's true faith is contained in what it does not occur to us to question."⁶⁰

Even though since then Card has increasingly made Mormonism his *subject*, he has continued to reaffirm that position against didacticism. Tory C. Anderson, in an editorial in the second issue of the first journal devoted entirely to Mormon literature, *Wasatch Review International*, argues that, because good literature more fully and accurately imitates life in the work and thus can give us moral *experience* as well as knowledge, it can be much more effective than the more abstract forms of sermon and moralistic story at the very purposes those forms espouse—showing us how and how not to live.⁶¹

Historical Period Three: The "Lost" Generation, 1930–70

THE FIRST FLOWERING of an artistically excellent Mormon literature that was able to be published nationally and gain national recognition came in the 1930s and 1940s. But its authors' very reaction against the provinciality and moralism of Mormon "home literature" tended to give it the expatriate, even patronizing, qualities and consequent rejection by many Mormons that led Edward A. Geary to dub those authors "lost."⁶² The main figures were Vardis Fisher, who won the Harper Prize in 1939 for *Children of God: An American Epic* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), which covers most of nineteenth-century Mormon history; Maurine Whipple, who won the Houghton Mifflin Literary Prize in 1938 and published *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), based on the settling of Utah's Dixie; and Virginia Sorensen, who also began with a novel about early Mormon history, *A Little Lower Than the Angels* (New York: Knopf, 1942), but then did her

best work set in the time (early twentieth century) and place (Sanpete Valley) of her own youth. Among these works is what many consider the best Mormon novel, *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949) and her collection of “stories,” *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963).⁶³

Geary’s pioneering work on this period identified about twenty nationally published works by a dozen authors who were alike in their essentially “regional” qualities of responding to a time of what they saw as cultural breakdown. Cracroft has praised Samuel W. Taylor’s *Heaven Knows Why* (New York: A. A. Wyn, 1948) as the best Mormon humorous novel and has also identified other more recent novelists who for him fit the “lost generation” rubric.⁶⁴ Jorgensen has traced the “lost generation” characteristics in a number of expatriate Mormon short story writers of the period.⁶⁵

It seems to me useful to identify two writers of nonfiction as part of this literary “period”; they were quite different from each other but shared the “lost” generation’s impulse toward more realistic and less apologetic dealing with the Mormon past and were also, to some degree, rejected by Mormons. Fawn Brodie’s thoroughly researched *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1945) introduced the psychological approach she became famous for. Having more the strengths of a novel than biography, it was written from the point of view that Smith was a powerful charismatic genius but also a charlatan and made him into an interesting “character” as no other book had done—but it also led to her excommunication.⁶⁶

Juanita Brooks’s *Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1950), the first work to deal thoroughly and openly with the most tragic event of Utah Mormon history, became the model (and Brooks the hero) for the “New Mormon History,” a whole movement of less didactic biography and historiography by faithful Mormons.⁶⁷ Brooks was ostracized by many Mormons but, unlike Brodie, remained a faithful Mormon and, as her biographer Levi S. Peterson has argued, was able to provide an important moral and spiritual service for the Mormon community through her work and example.⁶⁸

Historical Period Four: Faithful Realism, 1960–Present

RICHARD H. CRACROFT, while recognizing some of the weaknesses of the home literature of Nephi Anderson, claimed (in 1985) that his work “should be instructive to modern Mormon writers” in their attempts to be “at once artistic and orthodox.”⁶⁹ Edward A. Geary, while criticizing the “lost generation” for its own kind of provincialism in seeing mainly the worst of Mormonism and assuming its imminent demise, recognized the “fine artistry” of their novels, comparable with “better known works in the mainstream tradition,” and claimed (in 1978) “they are the best Mormon novels we have, and we are not likely to get better ones until we learn what they have to teach.”⁷⁰ Since about 1960, an increasing number of Mormon writers have indeed been able to learn from the previous periods and, I believe, have produced a literature that is both artistic and ethical, that can both teach and delight as the best literature always has, that is realistic, even critical, about Mormon

experience but profoundly faithful to the vision and concerns of the restored gospel of Christ.⁷¹

The spiritual father of the latest period of Mormon literature is Clinton F. Larson. Larson came under the influence of the craftsmanship and the religious passion of T. S. Eliot and other modern poets in the 1930s and 1940s, mainly through his teacher at the University of Utah, Brewster Ghiselin, himself a fine young American poet. In the midst of this apprenticeship, Larson served as a missionary under the eloquent, urbane, and spiritually direct Hugh B. Brown, later an Apostle. These influences helped him depart both from the didactic and inward-looking provinciality of the first two periods and the elitist, patronizing provinciality of his contemporaries in the “lost generation.” He began in the 1950s to write a unique Mormon poetry of modernist sensibility and skill but also informed and passionate faith. Grounded in knowledge of Mormon theology and history and contemporary life and thought and also devoutly part of, rather than standing apart from, the Mormon people, Larson was able, with intelligent discrimination, to both attack and affirm the world and also Mormon culture. Karl Keller, reviewing Larson’s first collection, *The Lord of Experience* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), in 1968, wrote that it provided the first Mormon poetry that was *real* poetry: “It does not show art filling a religious purpose but shows . . . religion succeeding in an aesthetic way.”⁷²

Larson also helped the new tradition of “faithful” but “realistic” Mormon literature along by founding the first Mormon scholarly and literary periodical, *BYU Studies*, in 1959 and contributing his poetry regularly there and to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, which was founded in 1966. Other poets, such as his colleagues at Brigham Young University (Edward L. Hart, Marden J. Clark, and John S. Harris) and Mormon poets outside the university (Carol Lynn Pearson, Lewis Horne, and Emma Lou Thayne) developed their own styles of Mormon poetry in the 1960s and 1970s; but all were influenced by Larson, if not in style or subject matter, then in being encouraged toward the new possibility he created of poetry deeply grounded in Mormon theology and experience yet also responsive to personal vision and feelings rather than merely to didactic or institutional purposes.⁷³

Younger poets in the 1980s and 1990s have come even more thoroughly under the influence of contemporary American and other poets; they have produced poetry that, in its challenges to traditional forms and methods as well as its interest in current issues like feminism, multiculturalism, and postmodernist anxiety about language itself, seems to some not Mormon at all. But skilled and faithful Mormon poets who appear regularly in national periodicals, such as Linda Sillitoe, Susan Howe, Lance Larsen, and Kathy Evans, seem to others of us to be taking the faithful realism Larson first created in interesting and valuable contemporary directions.⁷⁴

Douglas Thayer and Donald R. Marshall, who were students and later teachers at Brigham Young University, became the first to explore Clinton F. Larson’s new possibility in *fiction*. Departing from the mode of expatriate Mormon writers still publishing nationally in the 1960s and even the 1970s,⁷⁵ they began to write skillful stories that explored Mormon thought and culture in a critical but fundamentally affirmative way. Marshall was the first to publish collections, *The Rummage Sale: Collections and Recollections* (Provo, Utah: Heirloom Publications, 1972; most

recent republication Salt Lake City: Tabernacle Books, 1999) and *Frost in the Orchard* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), and his range is wider, from experimental stories based entirely on such things as lists or letters to sophisticated work in point of view (“The Weekend”) and symbolism (“The Wheelbarrow”). Thayer began publishing stories in *Brigham Young University Studies* and *Dialogue* in the mid-1960s, and his influence has perhaps been wider and more lasting. As one younger Mormon writer, John Bennion, who has himself already published a fine collection that includes experimental contemporary styles and subjects,⁷⁶ wrote, “Thayer taught us how to explore the interior life, with its conflicts of doubt and faith, goodness and evil, of a believing Mormon.”⁷⁷

Conflict is, of course, the very essence of fiction, and contemporary Mormon writers have found how to reveal and explore the conflicts inherent in Mormonism’s complex theology and its rich history and cultural experience. Thayer has written a fine novel, *Summer Fire* (Midvale, Utah: Orion Books, 1983), which examines the challenge and possibility of redemption in the conflict posed by an innocent and self-righteous Mormon youth’s exposure to evil on a Nevada hay ranch. His second collection, *Mr. Wahlquist in Yellowstone and Other Stories* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1989), both exploits and exposes the romantic fallacies in male response to the seductions of wilderness which have produced a conflict, even in Mormons, between heroic manhood and the values of family and community.⁷⁸

Levi S. Peterson, who acknowledges his debt to Thayer for teaching him to write in a simple and direct style about Mormon experience, has produced two fine collections, *The Canyons of Grace: Stories* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) and *Night Soil: New Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), as well as a novel which some consider the best yet by a Mormon, *The Backslider* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986).⁷⁹ All of Peterson’s work explores in some form the conflicts in Mormon experience and popular thought between the Old Testament Jehovah of rewards and punishments and the New Testament Christ of unconditional acceptance and redemptive love.

Mormon fiction of the past twenty years has most fully realized the hopes of many for an excellent but genuinely and uniquely Mormon literature, with a steady increase in both quantity and quality. There are now dozens of skilled writers of a great variety of methods and perspectives: Some are continuing or improving on the “home literature” tradition, such as Shirley Sealy, Susan Evans McCloud, Jack Weyland, Brenton G. Yorgason and Blaine M. Yorgason, Carol Hoeffling Morris, and Gerald Lund; some who are publishing excellent work nationally are to some degree expatriates and show that in their work, such as Laura Kalpakian, Judith Freeman, and Walter Kirn.⁸⁰

But there is a large group of faithful Mormon writers of what I call the “new Mormon fiction”⁸¹ who are both publishing nationally and gaining a growing audience of appreciative Mormon readers. Good examples are Linda Sillitoe and Michael Fillerup, both of whom explore feminism and multicultural issues from a Mormon perspective;⁸² Lewis Horne and Neal Chandler, who live and write about Mormon life outside the Wasatch Front;⁸³ and Phyllis Barber and Margaret Young, who have growing reputations for both their story collections and their novels.⁸⁴

Perhaps the most prolific and innovative among these (certainly the most widely read and honored) is Orson Scott Card, who began as a Mormon playwright in the 1970s but then wrote traditional science fiction without Mormon reference and reached the very top of his field with Hugo and Nebula Awards two years running in 1986 and 1987. However, he turned back to openly Mormon works, beginning with *A Woman of Destiny* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984; rpt. as *Saints*, New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1988) and continuing with a fantasy series, *The Tales of Alvin Maker* based on the life of Joseph Smith; straightforward Mormon science fiction stories in *The Folk of the Fringe* (West Bloomfield, Mich.: Phantasia Press, 1989); a science fiction series, *Homecoming*, based on the Book of Mormon; and a novel of contemporary Mormon domestic (and spiritual) realism, *Lost Boys* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

Card is the first of the latest generation of Mormon writers to have a book written about his work: Michael R. Collings's *In the Image of God: Theme, Characterization, and Landscape in the Fiction of Orson Scott Card* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).⁸⁵ Collings compares Card to C. S. Lewis in his skillful invention of alternate worlds in which to explore more effectively important religious questions and affirmations—what might be called, on the model of Latin American novelists, “magic realism.” Card has also entered the controversy over what makes good Mormon literature, both as critic and publisher: He has started his own publishing company, Hatrack River Publications, and in the foreword to its first offering, Kathryn H. Kidd's *Paradise Vue*, he offers as rationale that most Mormon novels have either “tended to be very simple-minded and presented a sugar-coated view of Mormon life” or “tended to be slow-moving, dull, and pretentious.” He proposes to provide stories that “are at once fascinating and illuminating,” that “give their readers . . . both entertainment and understanding.”⁸⁶

If fiction is the area where Mormons are just now beginning to fulfill the prophetic hopes for Mormon literature and to have some impact on national and world literature, it is the personal essay that seems to me to have the greatest *potential* for making a uniquely valuable Mormon contribution both to Mormon cultural and religious life and to that of others. Our theological emphasis on life as a stage where the individual self is both tested and created and our history of close self-examination in journals and testimony-bearing provide resources that have mainly been realized in great sermons⁸⁷ and various forms of autobiography but increasingly find expression in powerful informal essays and personal and family storytelling.⁸⁸

The revered Brigham Young University English professor P. A. Christensen produced two volumes of informal essays (*All in a Teacher's Day* [Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1948] and *Of a Number of Things* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1962]) and various other Mormons have written effective literary, religious, and historical essays with personal dimensions.⁸⁹ However, it was Edward Geary, with “Goodbye to Poplarhaven,” published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (summer 1973): 56–62, who first revealed to his own community the great potential of the Mormon personal essay as an art form.⁹⁰

Stimulated in part by *Dialogue's* establishment in 1971 of a regular section, “Personal Voices,” and the example of Geary and others, writers developed this form

rapidly. Personal essays also began to appear occasionally in *BYU Studies*, and often in new periodicals like the *Ensign* (1970), *Exponent II* (1973), and *Sunstone* (1975), and by the late 1970s and early 1980s had begun to be published in edited or individual collections⁹¹ and to receive some critical attention.⁹²

By the mid-1980s some Mormon writers were extending the range of the personal essay form to include diverse voices in the same essay and other elements usually confined to fiction and to consider issues like feminism and ecology—and some were occasionally published nationally.⁹³ One measure of the growing range and influence of the Mormon personal essay in the 1990s is the warm reception both nationally and by her own community of Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), which received excellent reviews and was awarded the Association for Mormon Letters Prize in 1992 for the personal essay. Another good omen is Phyllis Barber, who won both the 1991 Associated Writing Programs Award in "Creative Non-Fiction" and a 1993 Association for Mormon Letters award for *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), which is essentially a collection of avant garde personal essays.⁹⁴

Drama might also be expected to be a prominent Mormon literary form, for some of the same reasons of theology and cultural history that explain the importance of the personal essay. However, despite strong support for popular dramatic productions beginning in Nauvoo and the Salt Lake Theatre and the "roadshow" tradition in twentieth-century Mormon wards,⁹⁵ as well as Crawford Gates's very popular pioneer centennial musical, *Promised Valley* (1947), it was not until the 1960s that there was much realistic drama written by Mormons about Mormon experience. The first were mainly "closet dramas," such as Clinton F. Larson's *The Mantle of the Prophet*, and musicals, like Doug Stewart's *Saturday's Warrior* and Carol Lynn Pearson's *The Order Is Love*. By the late 1970s, however, fine Mormon dramas were being quite regularly written and produced at Brigham Young University. Of these probably the best single achievement is Robert Elliott's *Fires of the Mind*, and the finest single playwright is Thomas Rogers, who has produced plays regularly for twenty years at a consistent high quality and reached the highest level of excellence with *Huebener*.⁹⁶

A fine tradition of one-person plays was inaugurated by James Arrington in the late 1970s with his *Here's Brother Brigham* and *Farley Family Reunion* (still regularly performed, available on video, and considered by some as perhaps the best of authentic Mormon drama).⁹⁷ The most promising younger playwrights seem to be Susan E. Howe (*The Burdens of Earth* and *A Dream for Katy*⁹⁸), Tim Slover (*Dreambuilder* and *Scales*⁹⁹), Neil Labute (*In the Company of Men* and *Sanguinarians*¹⁰⁰), Eric Samuelson (*Accommodations*¹⁰¹), and Margaret Young.¹⁰² (See also Michael Hicks, "The Performing Arts and Mormonism: An Introduction," in David J. Whittaker, ed., *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States* [Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995]: 538–58).

Some Mormon writers of the fourth period are achieving success, both locally and nationally, in high quality children's and young adult literature. Fine examples of the former are Steve Wunderli's *Marty's World*, illustrated by Brent Watts (Salt

Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), Phyllis Barber's *Legs: The Story of a Giraffe* (New York: M. K. McElderry Books, 1991), Catherine Hepworth's *Antics! An Alphabetical Anthology* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1992) and Michael O. Tunnell's three books, *Chinook!*, *The Joke's on George*, and *Beauty and the Beastly Children* (all New York: William Morrow, 1993), which won the AML prize. Examples of the best books by Mormons for young adults are Donald R. Marshall, *Enchantress of Crumbledown* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990); Ann Edwards Cannon, *Amazing Gracie* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1991); Louise Plummer, *My Name Is Sus5an Smith. The 5 Is Silent* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1991); and Dean Hughes, *Jenny Haller* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983) and *Go to the Hoop!* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

PROSPECTS

THE FUTURE OF Mormon literature is potentially both bright and vexed. On the one hand, a number of new periodicals and presses,¹⁰³ together with increasingly popular classes in Mormon literature at Brigham Young University and Utah Valley State College, are rapidly expanding the audience for good Mormon literature. Good criticism, both theoretical and practical, is regularly fostered, especially by the Association for Mormon Letters,¹⁰⁴ and regular book review columns¹⁰⁵ and even journals entirely devoted to Mormon literature are appearing. With the recent success of Orson Scott Card and Terry Tempest Williams, the national publishing market's unaccountable resistance to Mormon writing may be lessening. Anne Perry, a British convert who regularly publishes Victorian mystery novels to high critical acclaim, has recently moved from expressing her Mormon convictions only in the powerful underlying moral climate of her work to somewhat more open reference to Mormonism and is under contract for a fantasy trilogy which will deal quite directly with two women's spiritual quest.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, the potentially creative tension between the two poles of Mormons' expectations about their literature—the conflict between orthodox didacticism and faithful realism explored in the recent essays by Cracroft and Jorgensen—seems at times to be breaking down into invidious judgments, name-calling, and divisions. These divisions and exclusions have increased since the late 1970s, when Elder Packer and President Kimball encouraged Mormon writers to fulfill the prophecies of literary excellence. Even the eclectic harmony of the forums in which those leaders then spoke now seems a distant dream: Elder Packer was published in a book of essays that included Mormon critics and writers as diverse as Reid Nibley, Edward L. Hart, and Wayne C. Booth; President Kimball appeared in an issue of the *Ensign* which included (with implied approval) artists across the full range of Mormon approaches, from didactic home literature by Orson F. Whitney, Charles Penrose, and Lael J. Littke to recent realistic and experimental work by Clinton Larson, Emma Lou Thayne, Donald Marshall, and Orson Scott Card. Now Mormon letters seems increasingly bifurcated into mutually exclusive forums, periodicals, and presses, which I fear will impede our progress toward the rich, diverse, mutually tolerant literary community and achievements we are capable of.¹⁰⁷

Mormon literature will always have a difficult burden—to describe a unique set of revealed truths and historical and continually vital religious experiences and to do so both truly and artistically. We seem to understand this better about other art forms than about literature, where the temptation is greatest to assume that a good “message” is enough. (Most Mormons can see right away that a painting of Joseph Smith’s first vision done badly would demean the experience or that a clumsy or sentimental musical score on the suffering of Christ in Gethsemane would be a kind of blasphemy, but a “faith-building” story or one based on “real experience,” however badly written or sentimental in its appeal, is often received uncritically.)

An increasing number of faithful Latter-day Saints are developing the skill and courage to write well in all the genres. The challenge they face—which must be faced as well by their readers, both Mormons and others—is to find ways to reach out to and unite the extremes of experience President Kimball recommended and to accept the role of art in assisting in the central human purpose Brigham Young described: “We cannot obtain eternal life unless we actually know and comprehend by our experience the principle of good and the principle of evil, the light and the darkness, truth, virtue, and holiness, also vice, wickedness, and corruption.”¹⁰⁸

To gain such comprehension, we must be willing, both as writers and readers, to do as Joseph Smith did—and called us to do: “Thy mind, . . . if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity.”¹⁰⁹ A literature to match the high religious achievement of the Restoration Joseph Smith began requires both the breadth and the depth he achieved—literary skill, moral courage, and generosity—and also the spiritual passion that brought about his visions and continues to give a unique quality to the life of faithful Mormons. Mormon writers, if they are true to their sacred and powerful art of language as well as their sacred and powerful religious heritage, can aspire, Elder Packer promised in 1976,¹¹⁰ to enjoy the promise by Christ to Joseph Smith: “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you . . . ask, and ye shall receive” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

NOTES

¹ This version has been adapted slightly from that found in David J. Whittaker, ed., *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995), 455–505 (some updated bibliographic material and the addition of weblinks). An abbreviated version of this same essay may be found in Lavina Fielding Anderson and Eugene England, eds., *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1996). An earlier, seminal version with some philosophical discussion not in this current version is “The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature After 150 Years,” *BYU Studies* 22 (spring 1982): 131–60, reprinted in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, *Charles Redd Monographs in Western History*, no. 3 (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1983), 97–146. An online version, linked to the Mormon Literature web site, can be found at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/progress.htm. IRREANTUM is grateful to Charlotte England for granting permission to reprint this version.

² Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), ix.

³ Studies reported in *Time*, April 5, 1993, 46–47.

⁴ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). See also Eric Eliason, ed., *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

⁵ Cited in Spencer W. Kimball, “The Gospel Vision of the Arts,” *Ensign* 7 (July 1977): 3.

⁶ Orson F. Whitney, “Home Literature,” in *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints*, ed. Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 300. The complete text may be found online at the Mormon Literature web site at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/homelit.htm.

⁷ Boyd K. Packer, “The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord,” in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 268, reprinted in Steven P. Sondrup, ed., *Arts and Inspiration: Mormon Perspectives* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1980), 5–6.

⁸ Kimball, “Gospel Vision of the Arts,” 5.

⁹ England, “Dawning of a Brighter Day,” 131–60, including “Selected Bibliography.” Reprinted in expanded form in Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, eds., *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, 97–146.

¹⁰ Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, and *Twenty-two Young Mormon Writers* (Provo, Utah: Communications Workshop, 1974).

¹¹ Richard H. Cracroft, “Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature,” *Sunstone* 16 (July 1993): 51–57; complete text may be found online at the Mormon Literature web site at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/attune.htm; see also his review of *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* in *BYU Studies* 30 (spring 1990): 119, 121–23; online at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/cracrevh.htm.

¹² Packer, “Art and the Spirit,” 10, 16.

¹³ Bruce W. Jorgensen, “To Tell and Hear Stories: Let the Stranger Say.” *Sunstone* 16 (July 1993): 41–50, reprinted in Anderson and England, *Tending the Garden*, 49–68; complete text accessible on the Mormon Literature web site at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/totell.htm. Jorgensen’s essay is an expanded version of his 1991 presidential address for the Association for Mormon Letters, which responded in part to Cracroft’s review of *Harvest* cited above; Cracroft’s essay, published together with Jorgensen’s in *Sunstone*, is his 1992 AML presidential address, which in good part responds to Jorgensen. See also Gideon Burton’s response to both essays, “Should We Ask, ‘Is This Mormon Literature?’: Towards a Mormon Criticism,” *The Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994* (Salt Lake City: AML, 1994), 227–33; *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 32 (fall 1999): 33–43; complete text accessible on the Mormon Literature web site at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/gbask.htm.

¹⁴ Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 5.

¹⁵ Karl Keller, “The Example of Flannery O’Connor,” *Dialogue* 9 (winter 1974): 62.

¹⁶ Quoted in Keller, “Example of Flannery O’Connor,” 68.

¹⁷ Quoted in Keller, “Example of Flannery O’Connor,” 68. O’Connor has also seemed to others a good model for Mormon writers: In “Digging the Foundation: Making and Reading Mormon Literature” (*Dialogue* 9 [winter 1974]: 50–61), Bruce Jorgensen quotes her citing Aquinas that “art . . . is wholly concerned with the good of that which is made” and proposing that an art work that is “good in itself glorifies God because it reflects God” (56). In a review of Levi Peterson’s *Night Soil* (*Weber Studies* 8 [fall 1991]: 99–100), I propose that “in Levi Peterson, Western literature and Mormon literature finally have their Flannery O’Connor” (99).

¹⁸ Keller, “Example of Flannery O’Connor,” 71.

¹⁹ Keller, “Example of Flannery O’Connor,” 69–70.

²⁰ B. H. Roberts’s comprehensive theology, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994). Also, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology: The Masterwork of B. H. Roberts*, ed. Stan Lar-

son, with an introduction by Sterling M. McMurrin (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).

²¹ Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18 (winter 1978): 193–208.

²² Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 27 vols. (Liverpool, England: R James, 1855), 2:90–96.

²³ See Eugene England, "Great Books or True Religion?: Defining the Mormon Scholar," *Dialogue* 9 (winter 1974): 36–49; reprinted in *Dialogues with Myself* (Midvale, Utah: Orion Books, 1984), 57–76.

²⁴ Cracroft and Lambert, basically formalists, have also been sensitive to historical and ethical approaches, as have Jorgensen and Edward Geary, who were, like them, trained in New Criticism. I have used formalist close analysis and ethical criticism based on the work of Yvor Winters, Robert Scholes, René Girard, and Emmanuel Levinas. Jorgensen and I have both used myth criticism, based on the work of Northrop Frye. Recently, Cecilia Konchar Farr has effectively used feminist criticism on Maurine Whipple's work, and she and Philip Snyder presented an illuminating poststructuralist reading of Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge* and Thoreau's *Walden* as ecobiography at the Association for Mormon Letters symposium in January 1993 ("From Walden Pond to the Great Salt Lake: Ecobiography and Engendered Species Acts in Walden and Refuge," in Anderson and England, *Tending the Garden*, 197–211). Tom Plummer applied reader response criticism to *Refuge* in "Is There Refuge in the Text?: Narrator and Reader in Terry Tempest Williams's Memoir," presented at the AML symposium in January 1994 (Annual of the Association for Mormon Letters, 1995 [Salt Lake City: AML, 1995]: 237–47).

²⁵ Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 203.

²⁶ For a discussion of the relations between religious thought and postmodern philosophy, see James E. Faulconer, "An Alternative to Traditional Criticism," *Proceedings of the Symposia of the Association for Mormon Letters, 1979–82* (Salt Lake City: AML, 1983), 111–24; and James E. Faulconer, "Protestant and Jewish Styles of Criticism: Derrida and His Critics," *Literature and Belief* 5 (1985): 45–66; for my own reflections on these matters, more complete than my comments here, see "Dawning of a Brighter Day," 135–36 [editor's note: the relevant passages from "Dawning" have in part been added into this version and follow this paragraph], and *Beyond Romanticism: Tuckerman's Life and Poetry* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1991), 17–21, 207–9. Hugh Nibley, in "Genesis of the Written Word," in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, vol. 12 of The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; FARMS: Provo, Utah, 1992), 450–90, presents evidence for a single, divinely instituted beginning of human language.

²⁷ Douglas Wilson, "Prospects for the Study of the Book of Mormon as a Work of American Literature," *Dialogue* 3 (spring 1968): 29–41.

²⁸ The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) sponsors symposia and publishes a newsletter, essays, books, and a journal, many of which greatly help readers see through to the human realities of text, writers, and editor as a better basis for imaginative response to the Book of Mormon. See, for example, John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985); and Sorenson, "When Lehi's Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?" in the first issue of the new journal sponsored by FARMS, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1 (fall 1992): 1–34.

²⁹ John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10 (fall 1969): 69–84; reprinted in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, vol. 7 of Religious Studies Monograph Series (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 33–52; Bruce W. Jorgensen, "The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert, vol. 5, Religious Studies Monograph Series (Provo, Utah: Religious

Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 217–31; Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997). For an example of ethical literary criticism, based on the work of René Girard and Northrop Frye, see Eugene England, “A Second Witness for the Logos: The Book of Mormon and Contemporary Literary Criticism,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:91–125. Some other important and representative literary criticism of the Book of Mormon includes: George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” 245–62, and Richard Dilworth Rust, “‘All Things Which Have Been Given of God . . . Are the Typifying of Him’: Typology in the Book of Mormon,” 233–43, both in *The Literature of Belief*; Steven P. Sondrup, “The Psalm of Nephi: A Lyric Reading,” *BYU Studies* 21 (summer 1981): 357–72; and Richard Dilworth Rust, “Liminality in the Book of Mormon,” in *The Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994* (Salt Lake City: AML, 1994), 2:207–11.

³⁰ James B. Allen, “The Significance of Joseph Smith’s ‘First Vision’ in Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue* 1 (fall 1966): 29–45; Allen, “Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision: What Do We Learn from Them?” *Improvement Era* 73 (April 1970): 4–13; Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 31–42; Arthur Henry King, “Joseph Smith as a Writer,” in *The Abundance of the Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 197–205; and Steven C. Walker, “Doctrine and Covenants as Literature,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:427.

³¹ Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984); and Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989, 1992). See also Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971).

³² Larson, “King Follett Discourses,” see n. 19; Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980).

³³ See *The Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971 printing); and *The Essential Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992). The *Journal of Discourses* provides a remarkably complete record of sermons by Church leaders from 1854 to 1886. For some analysis, see Eugene England, “Brigham Young as Orator and Intellectual,” in *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986; Salt Lake City: Tabernacle, 1999), 93–108.

³⁴ For a general bibliography see Davis Bitton, ed., *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977).

³⁵ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, Typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenny, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85). See also the condensed version, *Waiting for World’s End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).

³⁶ Published in Eliza R. Snow, *Eliza R. Snow: An Immortal, Selected Writings of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan Sr., Foundation, 1957), 292–370. For discussion of this diary’s literary merit, see Eugene England, “We Need to Liberate Mormon Men!” in *Dialogues with Myself*, 157–59.

³⁷ Eugene England, ed., “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” *BYU Studies* 18 (winter 1978): 151–78.

³⁸ Manuscript in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; published in full as “Death Strikes the Handcart Company,” in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 143–50.

³⁹ Manuscript in LDS Church Archives; published in part, with literary analysis, by Eugene

England, "Without Purse or Scrip: An 18-Year-Old Missionary in 1853," *New Era* 5 (July 1975): 20–28, which was reprinted as "'The Lord Knew That There Was Such a Person': Joseph Millett's Journal, 1853," in *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel*, 17–30.

⁴⁰ Quoted in William Mulder, in his ground-breaking critical essay, "Mormonism and Literature," *Western Humanities Review* 9 (winter 1954–55): 87; reprinted in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 208–11. At that early date Mulder praised such "unpretentious subliterate" and claimed that "it is as a collective expression that Mormon literature makes its greatest impact rather than in any single work so far by any single artist."

The best collections of letters are Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book in collaboration with the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974); Elizabeth Wood Kane (not a Mormon), *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona, Utah, Mormons, and the West* no. 4 (1874; Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1974); George S. Ellsworth, *Dear Ellen: Two Mormon Women and Their Letters* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1974); Frederick Stewart Buchanan, ed., *A Good Time Coming: Mormon Letters to Scotland* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988); and Constance L. Lieber and John Sillito, eds., *Letters from Exile: The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon, 1886–1889* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1989).

⁴¹ Maureen Ursenbach Beecher has published the best work on Snow's life and poetry and is at work on a biography and a complete edition of the poems. See Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Eliza and Her Sisters* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1991).

⁴² Eliza R. Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1856); and Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political. Also Two Articles in Prose* (Salt Lake City: Latter-day Saints' Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877).

⁴³ Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father," in *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 242.

⁴⁴ Phelps's enduring achievement is suggested by "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain," which begins each Mormon Tabernacle Choir broadcast, and "Hosanna Anthem" ("The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning"), composed for the dedication of the Kirtland temple in 1835 and still sung at all temple dedications. One of Pratt's most powerfully poetic hymns is "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe," with its remarkable metaphor for baptism, "We shall be buried in the stream / In Jesus' blessed name." See *Hymns*, nos. 46, 2, 180.

⁴⁵ For studies of Mormon tracts and other pamphlets, see David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982); David J. Whittaker, "Orson Pratt: Prolific Pamphleteer," *Dialogue* 15 (autumn 1982): 27–41; Peter Crawley, "Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering," *Dialogue* 15 (autumn 1982): 13–26; and *Scrap Book of Mormon Literature*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Ben E. Rich, n.d.), which reprints many of the nineteenth-century pamphlets.

⁴⁶ "A Dialogue between Joseph Smith and the Devil," *New York Herald*, January 1, 1844, was republished in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 259–65, and in *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 31–40. The *Autobiography* was first published in 1874 and reprinted many times since, the latest Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985. For a literary analysis of this work, see Robert A. Christmas, "The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt: Some Literary, Historical, and Critical Reflections," *Dialogue* 1 (spring 1966): 33–43.

⁴⁷ See Gean Clark, "A Survey of Early Mormon Fiction" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1935).

⁴⁸ "What Shall Our Children Read?" *Deseret Evening News*, April 21, 1869, 2; Elder George Q. Cannon started to publish a "Faith Promoting Series" of books in 1879, the first of which was his own account of *My First Mission*; the third, in 1881, Wilford Woodruff's *Leaves from My Journal*; and the fifth, that same year, James A. Little's biography, *Jacob Hamblin*. These

three were republished together by Preston Nibley as *Three Mormon Classics* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1944).

⁴⁹ *Journal of Discourses*, 9:173. See also Stephen Ken Ehat, "How to Condemn Noxious Novels, by Brigham Young," *Century 2*, vol. 1 (December 1976): 36–48; and Matthew Durrant and Neal E. Lambert, "From Foe to Friend: the Mormon Embrace of Fiction," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (fall 1982): 326–39.

⁵⁰ Orson F. Whitney, "Home Literature," *Contributor* 9 (June 1888): 297–302; reprinted in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 203–7. For a more thorough review of the "home literature" period, see Cracroft, "Seeking 'the Good, the Pure, the Elevating': A Short History of Mormon Fiction" (Parts I and II), *Ensign* 11 (June 1981): 57–62; (July 1981): 56–61.

⁵¹ Spencer also wrote fiction; see *The Senator from Utah and Other Tales of the Wasatch* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1895).

⁵² Roberts's play was based on *Corianton: A Nephite Story* (1902). See Cracroft, "Seeking 'the Good, the Pure, the Elevating,'" 61.

⁵³ First published in 1898, Anderson's novel was reprinted over forty times, most recently in Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992.

⁵⁴ Nephi Anderson, "Purpose in Fiction," *Improvement Era* 1 (February 1898): 271. Cited in Richard H. Cracroft, "Nephi, Seer of Modern Times: The Home Literature Novels of Nephi Anderson," *BYU Studies* 25 (spring 1985): 3–15. Anderson's essays seem intended to prepare a Church audience to value *Added Upon*.

⁵⁵ Cracroft, "Nephi, Seer of Modern Times," 15.

⁵⁶ In addition to Cracroft's "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice," see the conclusion to his "Seeking 'the Good, the Pure, the Elevating,'" 61: "The future of LDS fiction will probably be closely linked with Home Literature, for the LDS writer and the LDS reader share an abiding faith and hope in eternal principle, in the possibility of billions of happy endings. . . . But the message of Mormon fiction, while inevitably moral, as is most fiction, need not be painfully blatant." Cracroft's one example, Nephi Anderson, seems to counter Cracroft's own argument, since it was his admittedly inferior novel of "artless dogma" that remained popular and influenced later "home literature"—not his more skillful "dogmatic art" in the later works.

⁵⁷ Winters, though known as a formalist "New Critic," was adamant that a poem "is a statement in words about a human experience" (11) and must be responsible to rational ethical standards; see Yvor Winters, "The Morality of Poetry" and other essays in *In Defense of Reason*, 3d ed. (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1947). Booth, a Mormon, has been an articulate opponent of some recent trends in criticism, especially its move toward opposing—or simplistically applying—ethical considerations; see Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Booth has also addressed, satirically, the question of too easily applied religious didacticism, in a forum address at Brigham Young University, "Art and the Church: Or 'The Truths of Smoother,'" published in *Dialogue* 13 (winter 1980): 9–25.

⁵⁸ Karl Keller, "On Words and the Word of God: The Delusions of a Mormon Literature." *Dialogue* 4 (autumn 1969): 19–20.

⁵⁹ Bruce W. Jorgensen, "'Herself Moving beside Herself, Out There Alone': The Shape of Mormon Belief in Virginia Sorensen's *The Evening and the Morning*," *Dialogue* 13 (autumn 1980): 43–61.

⁶⁰ Orson Scott Card, "SF and Religion," *Dialogue* 18 (summer 1985): 12.

⁶¹ Tory C. Anderson, "Just the Fiction, Ma'am," *Wasatch Review International* 1, no. 2 (1992): 6: "The more experience I have, the more I understand this heart and soul, myself, and my fellow human beings. I have my own living experience, but good fiction expands that experience tenfold—one hundredfold—and makes it possible to apply any knowledge I have."

⁶² Edward A. Geary, "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s," *BYU Studies* 18 (fall 1977): 89–98; see also his "The Poetics of Provincialism: Mormon Regional Fiction," *Dialogue* 11 (summer 1978): 15–24. Bruce Jorgensen first used (but did not expand upon) the

phrase in “Digging the Foundation,” 58: “Mormon literature may be said to have its lost or half-lost generation, and some who have not expatriated themselves have suffered mistrust and even brutal ostracism.”

⁶³ Fisher gained much of his national prominence with work not connected with Mormonism, the Vridar Hunter tetralogy and his twelve *Testament of Man* novels, but remained to his death in 1968 best known for *Children of God*; see Joseph M. Flora, “Vardis Fisher and the Mormons,” *Dialogue* 4 (autumn 1969): 48–55. Whipple published various articles and stories and a guidebook, *This Is the Place: Utah* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945), but never completed her projected trilogy that would continue *Joshua* up to the present; see Maryruth Bracy and Linda Lambert, eds., “Maurine Whipple’s Story of *The Giant Joshua*,” *Dialogue* 6 (autumn/winter 1971): 55–62; Bruce Jorgensen, “Retrospection: *Great Joshua*,” *Sunstone* 3 (September–October 1978): 6–8; and the special section of essays on Whipple in *The Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994*. Sorensen received two Guggenheims, but she gained greatest recognition, including the Newbery Medal, for her children’s books; see Mary L. Bradford, “Virginia Sorensen: An Introduction,” *Dialogue* 13 (fall 1980): 13–16; and Eugene England, “Virginia Sorensen as the Founding Foremother of the Mormon Personal Essay: My Personal Tribute,” *Exponent II* 17, no. 1 (1992): 12–14.

⁶⁴ Richard H. Cracroft, “Freshet in the Dearth: Samuel W. Taylor’s *Heaven Knows Why* and Mormon Humor,” *Sunstone* 5 (May–June 1980): 31–37; and Cracroft, “Literature, Mormon Writers of: Novels,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:839. Two other important novels by Taylor are *Family Kingdom* (New York: McGraw, 1951) and *Nightfall at Nauvoo* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

⁶⁵ Bruce W. Jorgensen, “A ‘Smaller Canvas’ of the Mormon Short Story since 1950,” *Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1983* (Salt Lake City: AML, 1984), 10–31; see also Jorgensen, “Literature, Mormon Writers of: Short Stories,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:842–44.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the book’s many problems because of Brodie’s bias, see Marvin S. Hill, “Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*,” *Church History* 43 (March 1974): 78–96; and his review of the second edition in *Dialogue* 7 (winter 1972): 72–85. Newell G. Bringhurst’s “Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie—Sisters in Mormon Dissent,” *Dialogue* 27 (summer 1994): 105–27, explores the similarities, differences, and relationship between these two writers.

⁶⁷ For the best early essay on the problems and possibilities of Mormon historiography, see Richard L. Bushman, “Faithful History,” *Dialogue* 4 (winter 1969): 11–25, which, in an inversion of a Mormon epigram, suggests the possibility, relevant to authors of literature as well as history, that the writer’s success may be related to character: “[We gain] knowledge no faster than [we are] saved” (25). Recent collections of Mormon historiography (and some criticisms of it) of the past twenty-five years are George D. Smith, ed., *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992); and D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

⁶⁸ Levi S. Peterson, “Juanita Brooks: The Mormon Historian as Tragedian,” *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 47–54; Levi S. Peterson, *Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988). Brooks has also written an excellent autobiography, *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1982), and edited her husband’s autobiography, *Uncle Will Tells His Story* (Salt Lake City: Taggart, 1970).

⁶⁹ Cracroft, “Nephi, Seer of Modern Times,” 14.

⁷⁰ Geary, “Poetics of Provincialism,” 24.

⁷¹ Cracroft uses the term “faithful realism” to describe the recent group of Mormon novelists he most admires in his *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* essay (2:839). With his permission, I adopt it here for the entire fourth period of Mormon literature I am attempting to define.

⁷² Karl Keller, “A Pilgrimage of Awe,” review of Clinton F. Larson’s *The Lord of Experience*,

Dialogue 3 (spring 1968): 112; Thomas Schwartz, in “Sacrament of Terror: Violence in the Poetry of Clinton F. Larson,” *Dialogue* 9 (autumn 1974): 39–48, claims that Larson’s focus on unredemptive violence in both his plays and poetry makes his work not Mormon at all; in my judgment Larson profoundly expresses a tragic sense of pain and loss in the face of the violence inevitable in a universe of law and agency, a vision fully consonant with Mormon theology. Other important Larson collections of poetry are *Counterpoint: A Book of Poems* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973) and *The Western World* (Provo, Utah: Research Division, Brigham Young University, 1978).

⁷³ Carol Lynn Pearson, *Beginnings* (Provo, Utah: Trilogy Arts, 1967), *The Search* (Provo, Utah: Trilogy Arts, 1970), etc., and most recently, *Women I Have Known and Been* (Murray, Utah: Aspen Books, 1992); Emma Lou Thayne, *Spaces in the Sage* (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1971), and many other volumes, the latest being *Things Happen: Poems of Survival* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991); John S. Harris, *Barbed Wire* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974) and *Second Crop* (Provo, Utah: *BYU Studies* and Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1996); Edward L. Hart, *To Utah* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1979); and Marden J. Clark, *Moods: Of Late* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1979). See Eugene England and Dennis Clark, eds. *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), “Notes on Poets,” for more complete bibliographies of these poets, all of whom have continued publishing. A remarkable and singular achievement was R. Paul Cracroft’s long Mormon epic poem, *A Certain Testimony* (Salt Lake City: Epic West, 1979).

⁷⁴ See the editors’ commentaries in *Harvest*, and, for a contrary view, the review by Richard Cracroft (note 11, above). Linda Sillitoe has published in *Dialogue* and *Exponent II* and has a recent first collection, *Crazy for Living* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993); Susan Howe has published in *The New Yorker* and *Sewanee Review*; Lance Larsen has published in the *New Republic* and *Hudson Review* and has recently published a collection, *Erasable Walls* (Michigan: Western Michigan University, New Issues Press, 1998); Kathy Evans has published in the *Southern Review* and *California Quarterly* and has a first collection, *Imagination Comes to Breakfast* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992); Lisa Orme Bickmore has a new collection *Haste* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994).

⁷⁵ For the best review of these writers, such as Ray B. West Jr., Wayne Carver, and David Wright (who doesn’t quite fit the expatriate label but was “lost” to the Mormon literary community by his isolation and early death), see Jorgensen, ““Smaller Canvas,”” 10–31 and its excellent bibliography; also see Jorgensen’s “The Vocation of David Wright: An Essay in Analytic Biography,” *Dialogue* 11 (summer 1978): 38–52.

⁷⁶ John Bennion, *Breeding Leah and Other Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990). A story like “Dust,” in this collection, is both characteristically Mormon in its protagonist’s guilt-ridden response to the apocalyptic implications of his work on nerve gases and avant garde in its use of stylistic disjunctions Bennion learned from his teacher Donald Barthelme. Other avant garde Mormon writers include the postmodernist, occasionally minimalist, Darrell Spencer, who is publishing widely in prestigious magazines like *Epoch* and has two collections, *Woman Packing a Pistol* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Dragon Gate, 1987) and *Our Secret’s Out* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), and Brian Evenson, who has appeared in *The Quarterly* and *Nomad* and has also published a collection of short stories, *Altman’s Tongue* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

⁷⁷ Author’s notes from a lecture by Bennion at Brigham Young University, September 1991. Thayer’s very influential first collection was *Under the Cottonwoods and Other Mormon Stories* (Provo, Utah: Frankson Books, 1977; most recently republished Salt Lake City, Utah: Tabernacle Books, 1999).

⁷⁸ See Bruce W. Jorgensen, “Romantic Lyric Form and Western Mormon Experience in the Stories of Douglas Thayer,” *Western American Literature* 22 (spring 1987): 43–47, and Eugene

England, "Thayer's Ode to a Redtail Hawk," *Mormon Letters Annual, 1983* (Salt Lake City: Association for Mormon Letters, 1984), 42–53; revised as "Douglas Thayer's *Mr. Wahlquist in Yellowstone*: A Mormon's Christian Response to Wilderness," *BYU Studies* 34 (fall 1994): 52–72. In my judgment, Thayer's "The Redtail Hawk," *Dialogue* 4 (autumn 1969): 83–94, reprinted in *Mr. Wahlquist*, is the finest Mormon story yet. Its sophisticated use of point of view and its profound theme enable it to stand with the best American stories of the twentieth century.

⁷⁹ See Eugene England, "Wilderness as Salvation in Peterson's *The Canyons of Grace*," *Western American Literature* 19 (spring 1984): 17–28; Eugene England, review of *Night Soil*, in *Weber Studies* 8 (fall 1991): 99–100; and Eugene England, "Beyond 'Jack Fiction': Recent Achievement in the Mormon Novel," *BYU Studies* 28 (spring 1988): 97–109.

⁸⁰ See Eugene England's column in *This People* 11 (fall 1990): 65–68 for a review of many current "home literature" writers and Richard Cracroft's review of Gerald Lund's *The Work and the Glory*, vol. 1, in *BYU Studies* 31 (summer 1991): 77–81. For authors publishing nationally, see Laura Kalpakian, *Those Latter Days* (New York: Times Books, 1985); Judith Freeman, *The Chinchilla Farm* (New York: Norton, 1989); and Walter Kim, *My Hard Bargain* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

⁸¹ See Eugene England, "The New Mormon Fiction"—and also the notes on contributors and the list of "Other Notable Mormon Stories and Collections"—in Eugene England, ed., *Bright Angels and Familiars: Contemporary Mormon Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), xi–xx, 333–48. My column for the summer 1990 issue of *This People* 11, no. 2, pp. 63–65, describes the *annus mirabilis* of 1989–90, when nearly as much first-rate Mormon fiction was published as in the previous ten years, or the 150 years before that.

⁸² Sillitoe has a novel, *Sideways to the Sun* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987) and a collection of stories, *Windows on the Sea and Other Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); Fillerup has a collection, *Visions and Other Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), and a novel, *Beyond the River* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).

⁸³ Horne, who lives in Canada, publishes both poetry and prize-winning stories in a great variety of non-Mormon publications and now has a collection, *What Do Ducks Do in Winter?* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993); Chandler, who lives in Ohio, has a collection of short stories, *Benediction* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989) and has also published a play, *Appeal to a Lower Court*, in *Sunstone* 14 (December 1990): 27–50.

⁸⁴ Barber has a collection, *The School of Love* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), and a novel, *And the Desert Shall Blossom: A Novel* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991); Young has two novels, *House without Walls* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990) and *Salvador* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), and a collection, *Elegies and Love Songs* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1992). Her pioneering work treating African-American Latter-day Saints includes *I Am Jane*, a play about Jane Manning James, which won the Association for Mormon Letters Award in Drama for 2000, and *Standing on the Promises*, a trilogy of historical fiction written with Darius Gray, of which the first, *One More River to Cross*, has so far appeared (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000).

⁸⁵ For the critical writing about Card through 1990, both by Mormons and others, see Collings's bibliography. See also Eugene England "Speaker for the Dead and the Different," *This People* 14 (summer 1993): 41–50; England, "Pastwatch: The Redemption of Orson Scott Card"; and Mick McAllister, "Embracing the Other: The Beloved Alien and Other Ethical Fictions of Orson Scott Card," *Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994*, 2:158–65. Card forthrightly expresses some of his views on the values and moral quality of literature in *A Storyteller in Zion: Essays and Speeches* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993), 65–105, which also includes his important letter to *Dialogue* (summer 1985) on "Science Fiction and the Mormon Religion," 156–61.

⁸⁶ Orson Scott Card, "Foreword," in Kathryn H. Kidd, *Paradise Vue* (Greensboro, N.C.: Hatrack River Publications, 1989), x–xi, xiii. Card seems to me too harsh in his judgments of previous

novels and too impressed with the writers he is sponsoring, (“I am tempted to say that now . . . the Mormon people have their Jane Austen, their Mark Twain” [xiv]). He certainly seems right about his goals, but so far he is fulfilling them best through his own writing.

⁸⁷ The sermon tradition has been powerful and influential from the first, beginning with Joseph Smith (see Ehat and Cook, *Word of Joseph Smith*) and continuing through Brigham Young (Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*) and the other pioneer orators collected in the *Journal of Discourses*. The sermons of modern Church leaders whose sermon style has been influential, notably J. Reuben Clark, David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, Spencer W. Kimball, Gordon B. Hinckley, Neal A. Maxwell (AML prize, 1984), Marion D. Hanks, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Chieko N. Okazaki (AML prize, 1993) are available in the semi-annual *Conference Reports* and, since 1972, in the May and November issues of the *Ensign*. For an analysis of Mormon sermon style and its literary power, see Eugene England, “A Small and Piercing Voice: The Sermons of Spencer W. Kimball,” *BYU Studies* 25 (fall 1985): 77–90, reprinted in *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel*, 125–43; and Gideon Burton, “Twentieth-Century Mormon Eloquence: A Stylistic Analysis of Two Sermons by Neal A. Maxwell,” *Deseret Linguistics and Language Association Proceedings for 1997* (forthcoming). Also online at humanities.byu.edu/mldb/burton-max.htm. Though there are as yet no collections of sermons by lay Mormons, many such sermons have been published in official and independent periodicals, particularly in the “From the Pulpit” section of *Dialogue*, and many of the best modern personal essays are reworked sermons, showing the close connection between these two forms.

⁸⁸ William A. Wilson, a distinguished American folklorist, has written persuasively about the power and value of Mormon folk literature in *On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1981); “The Study of Mormon Folklore: An Uncertain Mirror for Truth,” *Dialogue* 22 (winter 1989): 95–110; “In Praise of Ourselves: Stories to Tell,” *BYU Studies* 30 (winter 1990): 5–24. See his “Mormon Folklore” in David J. Whittaker, ed., *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States* (Provo, Utah: *BYU Studies*, 1995), 437–54, for examples and resources for Mormon folklore, such as the work of Austin E. and Alta S. Fife and Thomas E. Cheney and the Mormon Folklore Archives at Brigham Young University and Utah State University. The special issue of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* on Mormon folklore (fall 1976) contains another foundational essay by Wilson: “A Bibliography of Studies in Mormon Folklore,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (fall 1976): 389–94.

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1989); Dennis Rasmussen, *The Lord’s Question: A Call to Come unto Him* (Provo, Utah: Keter Foundation, 1985); Neal A. Maxwell, *That Ye May Believe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992); Jeffrey R. and Patricia Holland, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989); Chieko N. Okazaki, *Lighten Up!* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); and Chieko N. Okazaki, *Cat’s Cradle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993).

⁹⁰ In their section on “The Essay” in *A Believing People*, Cracroft and Lambert included six essays that might be called informal, but only one, Geary’s “Goodbye to Poplarhaven,” that has the literary and personally revealing qualities that mark the excellent work being done since in this important form of the fourth period. In their introduction to that section, the editors express surprise that “the essay has not been as vital a literary force in Mormondom as might be expected” (201) and predict that “the personal essay will undoubtedly assume a larger role as a vehicle for the expression of the values of a people as manifest in the individual life of a sensitive writer” (202); and indeed Geary’s essay began the outpouring of work that has fulfilled that prediction. (There were a few excellent single essays before Geary’s, such as Karl Keller’s “Every Soul Has Its South,” *Dialogue* 1 [summer 1966]: 72–79, and Carole C. Hansen’s “The Death of a Son,” *Dialogue* 2 [autumn 1967]: 91–96, but they did not become part of a continuing body of influential work.) Geary in turn was influenced by Virginia Sorensen’s collection, *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and

World, 1963), and named his own collection *Goodbye to Poplarhaven: Recollections of a Utah Boyhood* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985). He uses a phrase for the Mormon country skyline from Sorensen's collection (in "The Ghost") for the title of his most recent work, an experimental combination of personal reflection with natural and cultural history, *The Proper Edge of the Sky: The High Plateau Country of Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

⁹¹ The earliest collections still tended to emphasize the somewhat scholarly and formal, such as Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Cambridge: Emmeline Press, 1976), and Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), but gradually the truly personal essay emerged in collections like Lowell L. Bennion's *The Things That Matter Most* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978); Eugene England's *Dialogues with Myself*; Sharon Hawkinson's *Only Strangers Travel* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984); Edward Geary's *Goodbye to Poplarhaven*; and Mary Lythgoe Bradford's *Leaving Home: Personal Essays* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987). Bradford also edited two notable collections: *Mormon Women Speak: A Collection of Essays* (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing, 1982) and *Personal Voices: A Celebration of Dialogue* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987).

⁹² See especially Mary Lythgoe Bradford, "I, Eye, Aye: A Personal Essay on Personal Essays," *Dialogue* 11 (summer 1978): 81–89; Clifton Holt Jolley, "Mormons and the Beast: In Defense of the Personal Essay," *Dialogue* 11 (autumn 1978): 137–39; Donlu Dewitt Thayer, "Literature, Mormon Writers of: Personal Essays," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:840–41; England, "Dawning of a Brighter Day," 152–54; and England, "Sorensen as the Founding Foremother," 12–14. For a general introduction to the contemporary personal essay, see *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*, selected and with a fine historical and theoretical introduction by Phillip Lopate (New York: Avelar Books, Doubleday, 1994).

⁹³ Kevin G. Barnhurst published directly Mormon personal essays, "Living without Health," *Commentary* 75 (April 1983): 33–40, and "The Lumpen Middle Class," *American Scholar* 51 (summer 1982): 369–79; Terry Tempest Williams published "The Clan of One-Breasted Women," which became the last chapter of *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), in *Northern Lights* 6 (January 1990): 9–11, and in *MS* 2 (September/October 1991): 31–34. See also Eugene England, "Easter Weekend," *Dialogue* 21 (spring 1988): 19–30 and England, "My Grandfather's Nickel," forthcoming in *Sewanee Review*. Illustrating the shifting border between fiction and personal essay is the work of Pauline Mortensen, written as personal essays for her master's thesis at Brigham Young University but published as stories in various periodicals, and her collection, *Back before the World Turned Nasty* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1989).

⁹⁴ Elouise Bell has published humorous personal essays regularly in *Network*, a magazine for professional women, collected in *Only When I Laugh* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990). Laurel Ulrich, who has published her personal essays regularly in *Exponent II*, which she helped found in 1974, as well as in the *Ensign* and *Dialogue*, has produced a collection of personal essays with Emma Lou Thayne, *All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Aspen, 1995). Ulrich brings to the personal essay an historical and gender sensitivity manifest in her better known national publications: *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (edited with J. Laslocky; New York: Knopf, 1982); *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); and most significantly, her 1990 Pulitzer Prize winning *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary 1785–1812* (New York: Knopf, 1990). Thomas Edward Cheney has published a fine collection of folkloristic and boyhood memories shaped into essays, *Voices from the Bottom of the Bowl: A Folk History of Teton Valley, Idaho, 1823–1952* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991).

⁹⁵ See the list of these and a fine short history of Mormon drama in Robert A. Nelson's entry on "Literature, Mormon Writers of: Drama," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:837–38. See also Eric Samuelson, "Whither Mormon Drama: Look First to a Theatre." *BYU Studies* 35, no. 1 (1995): 80–106.

⁹⁶ *Fires of the Mind* was published in *Sunstone* 1 (winter 1975): 23–93, and produced at BYU in 1974 and again in 1982, Robert A. Nelson directing. *Huebener* was produced at Brigham Young University in 1976, Ivan Crosland directing, and is published in Rogers's collections, *God's Fools: Plays of Mitigated Conscience* (N.p.: Eden Books, 1983; distributed by Signature Books) and *Huebener and Other Plays* (Provo, Utah: Poor Robert's Publishers, 1992). Frederick Bliss and P. Q. Gump (aliases for Orson Scott Card) published an early piece of useful dramatic criticism, "Mormon Shakespears [sic]: A Study of Contemporary Mormon Theatre," *Sunstone* 1 (spring 1976): 55–63. Recent work suggests a growing interest in Mormon dramatic criticism: see Nola D. Smith, "Madwomen in the Mormon Attic: A Feminist Reading of *Saturday's Warrior* and *Reunion*," in *The Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994* 1:139–44; and Michael Evendon, "Angels in a Mormon Gaze," *Sunstone* 17 (September 1994): 55–64.

⁹⁷ More recently Arrington has written *J. Golden* and, with Tim Slover, *Wilford Woodruff: God's Fisherman*, produced at Oxford, England, in 1987 and published in *Sunstone* 16 (February 1992): 28–48. This tradition has been further developed by Carol Lynn Pearson in *Mother Wove the Morning*, her recreation of sixteen women from history exploring the concept of a Mother God, which since 1990 has played regularly to audiences in Utah and throughout the country and is on video.

⁹⁸ *Burdens of Earth* was produced at Brigham Young University in 1987, directed by Robert A. Nelson, and published in *Sunstone* 11 (November 1987): 12–33; *Katy* was commissioned for the 1992 Brigham Young University Women's Conference and directed by Claudia Harris.

⁹⁹ *Dreambuilder* was produced at Brigham Young University in 1989, directed by John Elzen, and *Scales* was produced at Weber State University in 1981, directed by Tim Sutton.

¹⁰⁰ *In the Company of Men* was produced at Brigham Young University in 1992, directed by the author, and won the Association for Mormon Letters prize for 1993. *Sanguinarians* was produced at Brigham Young University and in Chicago in 1990.

¹⁰¹ *Accommodations* was produced at Brigham Young University in May 1993, directed by Thomas Rogers, and published in *Sunstone* 17 (June 1994): 30–53.

¹⁰² See note 84, above.

¹⁰³ In addition to the official Church periodicals, all of which continue to publish short stories (except for the *Ensign* [and now the *New Era*, which will discontinue fiction in 2002]), personal essays, and poetry, and the well-established unofficial journals such as *BYU Studies*, *Dialogue*, *Exponent II*, and *Sunstone*, which publish more contemporary and even experimental examples of these same forms (and, in the case of *Sunstone*, occasional dramas), new periodicals are constantly appearing, such as *This People* and *Zarahemla: A Forum for Mormon Poetry*. The most recent is *Wasatch Review International*, founded 1992, which is devoted entirely to publishing the best current literature and criticism [editor's note: *WRI* was no longer publishing as of 1998, and the publication that is now doing what *WRI* set out to do is *IRREANTUM*, the literary quarterly of the Association for Mormon Letters, which has been publishing since March 1999]. Deseret Book and Bookcraft continue to publish mainly didactic "home literature," though they have reached for new levels of faithful realism in writers like Carroll Hoefling Morris, whose *The Broken Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985) takes on the difficult topic of adultery, and Gerald Lund, who won the Association for Mormon Letters Awards in 1991 and 1993 for volumes one and four of his epic *The Work and the Glory* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990–2000). Signature Books is the main publisher of the writers of the fourth period, though some have been published recently by the University of Utah Press and an increasing number by national publishers. Although internal reorganization has somewhat altered its output since 1995, Aspen Books has nevertheless published an increasing number of books by Mormon writers of

all kinds, including an anthology, *Christmas for the World* (1991), Margaret Blair Young's fine novel *Salvador* (1992), Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Emma Lou Thayne's *All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir* (1995), Mormon humor (Robert F. Smith, Robert Kirby), young adult fiction (Carol Lynch Williams), historical fiction (Marilyn Brown), missionary fiction (Benson Parkinson), and biography (Helvecio Martins). Tabernacle Books has published one LDS children's book (Rulon T. Burton and Charlotte Mortimer, *The Island That Was Not There* [Salt Lake City: Tabernacle Books, 1998]) and has begun a series of reprint and original works of Mormon literature edited by Gideon O. Burton, Mormon Literary Library, in 1999, whose first three volumes include Douglas H. Thayer's *Under the Cottonwoods*, Eugene England's *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel*, and Donald R. Marshall's *The Rummage Sale*.

¹⁰⁴ The proceedings of this professional association, containing many of the best essays in Mormon literary criticism, have appeared in seven volumes, and its regular quarterly *Newsletter* includes short reviews of most new books of Mormon literature. [Editor's note: The AML *Newsletter* has been superceded, since 1999, by IRREANTUM.] It also encourages Mormon writers by sponsoring regular readings of new work in members' homes and through its annual awards in the novel, short fiction, poetry, personal essay, and criticism. The Association also awards honorary life memberships, with a handsome plaque, to distinguished contributors to Mormon letters.

¹⁰⁵ See Richard H. Cracroft's regular (beginning March 1991) column, "Alumni Book Nook," in *Brigham Young Magazine* for all Brigham Young University alumni (formerly *BYU Today*), and my "Worth Reading," which appears regularly (since 1988) in *This People*.

¹⁰⁶ See her very popular Victorian mystery series, which features the morally reflective Inspector Thomas Pitt and his remarkably liberated wife and co-crimesolver, Charlotte. *Bethlehem Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) deals in part with the starving to death of a Mormon convert by her abusive, chauvinist husband, who thinks he has the right to refuse a mere woman's decision about religion. The fantasy series begins with *Tathea* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999).

¹⁰⁷ The pain this dilemma creates for many Mormon writers was expressed recently by one, who said to me, "I believe God has given me an artistic gift with which to bless the Church and the world, and I have devoted my life to developing and sharing that gift. But the official Church magazines have made it clear they do not need or want my gift to fulfill their didactic purposes, the non-Mormon journals and presses reject my efforts to express my faith through my writing as too 'religious' for their audience, and when I write for the independent Mormon periodicals and presses I am considered, by many Mormons, *persona non grata*." [Editor's note: Eugene England has more fully discussed his concerns over current Mormon publishing in "Danger on the Right! Danger on the Left!: The Ethics of Recent Mormon Fiction," *Dialogue* 32 (fall 1999): 13–32.]

¹⁰⁸ *Journal of Discourses*, 7:237. Elsewhere Brigham Young insisted humans must "learn the nature of mankind, and to discern that divinity inherent in them. . . . We should not only study good, and its effects upon our race, but also evil, and its consequences" (cited in Cracroft, "Seeking 'the Good,'" pt. 1, 58).

¹⁰⁹ Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:295.

¹¹⁰ Packer, "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord," 281. I feel particularly good about the prospects of Mormon literature because I have recently read, in manuscript, Douglas Thayer's new novel, "A Member of the Church." It is a splendidly skilled and moving exploration of two different kinds of moral and spiritual life in young Mormon men—one that, I believe, fulfills Elder Packer's promise. [Editor's note: This manuscript has just been accepted for publication by Signature Books.]

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