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I, **Scott Hales**, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English & Comparative Literature.

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Of Many Hearts and Many Minds: The Mormon Novel and the Post-Utopian Challenge of Assimilation

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Of Many Hearts and Many Minds:
The Mormon Novel and the Post-Utopian Challenge of
Assimilation

by
Scott Hales

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Cincinnati in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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For much of their nineteenth-century history, Mormons rejected the novel as worldly entertainment that corrupted the young and propagated offensive Mormon stereotypes. This changed, however, when Mormons began to recognize the form's potential for promoting social betterment, teaching wholesome moral values, and using its popular appeal to draw people to the Mormon fold. Interestingly, this shift in attitude toward the novel came at a time when the Mormons, once a militantly separatist people, sought greater assimilation with the American mainstream by abandoning overt utopian practices, like polygamy and communal living, for practices that would no longer alienate them from the nation's Protestant majority. In my dissertation, I explore the relationship between this transitional period and the development of the Mormon novel, arguing that Mormons embraced the novel as a cultural site for mediating their paradoxical desire to separate from and participate in the American mainstream. Indeed, I show how the novel allowed Mormons to express their utopian principles—if not their utopian practices—as mainstream America compelled them to take what I call a “post-utopian” stance toward society. Moreover, I show how adopting the novel form also enabled Mormons to contribute to and engage American literary culture, construct Mormon identities, and explore their ambivalent encounters with others from inside and outside their ranks. Throughout this study, I draw upon utopian theory and Mormon history to understand the Mormon novel as a “post-utopian” product of the ongoing challenges of Mormon assimilation into mainstream American society. Beginning with the first Mormon novels of the late-nineteenth-century, I track how Mormon writers have borrowed from and enriched the American novel in their efforts to preserve and promote Mormonism's utopian principles, construct and define Mormon identities, and explore their ambivalent encounters with others

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The New Mormon Novel

Introduction

“[M]ade subservient to the building up of Zion”:

The Utopian Roots of the Mormon Novel

“For over fifty years the gospel has been preached to the poor and lowly. It will yet go to the high and mighty, even to kings and nobles, and penetrate and climb to places hitherto deemed inaccessible.

“Our literature will help to take it there; for this, like all else with which we have to do, must be made subservient to the building up of Zion.”—Orson F. Whitney, 1888

In Vladimir Nabakov’s *Lolita* (1955), Humbert Humbert’s meandering, cross-country road trip is cut short when Lolita comes down with a “bug” in the Rocky Mountain town of Elphinstone and has to be hospitalized for several days. Anxious and “stunned by [his] new solitude,” Humbert drives aimlessly through the town, listlessly taking in the view of the “domed silence” of a “pale temple of some local sect” (243). For readers, the imagery is unremarkable and nondescript. Elphinstone, like other fictional towns in the novel, is almost generic in its lack of specificity. It is only when Lolita’s nurse—a “ripe young hussy, reeking of urine and garlic”—gives Lolita a copy of the *Deseret News* to read that we can finally place Elphinstone in Utah, where the most prominent pale temples are those of the Mormons (245). Indeed, with this localizing insight, the details of Humbert’s description of Elphinstone fit easily within the familiar gridiron layout of Mormon cities and towns in Utah:

Elphinstone was, and I hope still is, a very cute little town. It was spread like a maquette, you know, with its neat green-wool trees and red-roofed houses over the valley floor and I think I have alluded earlier to its model school and temple

and spacious rectangular blocks, some of which were, curiously enough, just unconventional pastures with a mule or a unicorn grazing in the young July morning mist. (248)

Why Nabokov uses a Mormon setting in his novel is neither immediately apparent nor probably very significant. Likely, the vaguely Mormon landscape is a simple byproduct of Nabokov's own experience with Utah towns, gleaned from vacations to the mountains near Salt Lake City, as well as an incidental testament to the rather unassuming and pedestrian place Mormonism has come to occupy in America's cultural and religious landscape.¹

Mormons appear more overtly—though perhaps no more meaningfully—in other places in American literature. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, for instance, Miles Coverdale comments in passing on a wax figure of “the Mormon prophet” (229). Both Herman Melville's *Pierre* (1852) and *The Confidence-Man* (1857), likewise, reference Mormonism, with *The Confidence-Man* describing a utopian community “originally founded by certain fugitive Mormons” (76). Mark Twain's memoir *Roughing It* (1872) provides a lengthy, humorous account of Twain's visit to Salt Lake City in 1861 as well as an extended, satirical review of the Book of Mormon. Other appearances of Mormons in fiction by well-known authors include Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) and *The Rainbow Trail* (1915), Jack London's *The Star Rover* (1915), Allen Drury's *Advise and Consent* (1959), Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), Tom Clancy's *Clear and Present Danger* (1990), Gore Vidal's *Life from Golgotha* (1992), Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing* (1994), E. L. Doctorow's *The Waterworks* (1994), Jane Smiley's *The All True Travels of Lydie Newton* (1998), Jacquelyn Mitchard's *Cage of Stars* (2006), Gary Shteyngart's *Absurdistan* (2006), Louise Erdrich's *Plague of Doves* (2008) and David Ebershoff's *The 19th Wife* (2009). Beyond this, Mormons of

one sort or another have appeared on television in programs like *South Park*, *Big Love*, the reality TV series *Sister Wives*, and *Hell on Wheels*; in largely forgettable films like Trey Parker's *Orgazmo* (1997), C. Jay Cox's *Latter Days* (2003), Christopher N. Rowley's *Bonneville* (2006), Christopher Cain's *September Dawn* (2007), and Dustin Lance Black's *Virginia* (2010); and in critically-acclaimed stage productions like Alan J. Lerner and Frederick Loewe's *Paint Your Wagon* (1951), Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angels in America* (1993), and Trey Parker and Matt Stone's Tony Award-winning *The Book of Mormon* (2011).

While these works could be (and, to some extent, have been) the subject of a book-length study of Mormon representation in American and global culture, they are of only marginal interest to this current study, which focuses solely on novels about Mormons by Mormon authors.² I focus narrowly on the Mormon novel for a number of reasons. First, the varieties of Mormon cultural expression are diverse enough that one can—and, indeed, almost has to—significantly limit his or her scope or do as Terryl L. Givens and J. Michael Hunter have recently done and provide a general, or at least representative, overview of Mormon culture that makes up in breadth what it loses in depth. Second, to date, no study has been done that addresses over several chapters, the development and cultural work of the Mormon novel. Indeed, aside from a handful of journal articles and dissertations, the Mormon novel has never been the subject of much critical attention, despite the fact that it has a rich tradition of texts going back more than a century. (The same is true, sadly, for Mormon poetry and drama.) Third, substantial work has already been done on Mormon representation by artists, particularly novelists and dramatists, with no Mormon background, thus minimizing the urgency for further studies for the present. Finally, fourth, I am personally fascinated by the Mormon novel's late development in respect to other forms of Mormon cultural expression; that is, while poetry, drama, and, to a small extent,

short fiction have been staples of Mormon literature since the 1830s, the Mormon novel did not emerge until the late 1880s and early 1890s, a time that corresponded to an era of intense change within the Mormon community. Was this development coincidental, or were there factors, both within the Mormon community and its American host culture, that motivated and enabled its rise? This study seeks to make the case that there were such factors, the chief of which I call the “challenge of assimilation,” or the ultimatum mainstream America presented to the hitherto non-conformist Mormons at the end of the nineteenth century: play by the nation’s rules or face its wrath. How Mormon writers have used the novel to respond to this challenge is central to this study.

While the development of the Mormon novel is tied to a specific, little-known moment in American history, it nevertheless parallels similar trends in novels by other marginalized American groups, who likewise received challenges to assimilate. At the end of the nineteenth century, when the first Mormon novels appeared in print, it was not easy to be different (i.e. not white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and/or male) in the United States. Following the Civil War, eastern and southern European immigrants arrived in droves at America’s harbors, exacerbating already existing nativist feelings among the locals. While the newly-erected Statue of Liberty beckoned the world (via Jewish-American poet Emma Lazarus) to give her the “wretched refuse of [its] teeming shore,” native-born Americans were not as eager to welcome these impoverished and seemingly clannish “foreigners” (Lazarus 202-203). Rapidly filling “the slums, the factories, and the mines,” the Italians, Slavs, and Jews who comprised the majority of these immigrants seemed to embody “the social and economic ills” that white America feared would unsettle and even undermine their late-century society (Higham 273-274). Hostility towards Asian-, Native-, and African-Americans, grounded largely in white America’s “general hatred and contempt for

people of color,” was also pervasive (Saxton 295). In 1882, for example, President Chester A. Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law, prohibiting Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States. In 1885, racial tensions between white immigrant and Chinese laborers climaxed in Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory, when white coal miners burned Chinese miners’ barracks, then shot twenty-eight Chinese workers dead—and wounded fifteen more—as they emerged from the blaze (310). In December 1890, after decades of genocidal campaigns against indigenous Americans, the U.S. 7th Cavalry Regiment, numbering around 500 men, massacred some 300 Lakota men, women, and children near Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. In the South, despite the rise of prominent African-Americans like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as organizations like the NAACP, Jim Crow laws kept white and black America separate and not equal in any real sense. Lynchings were particularly rampant at this time. Between 1882 and 1968, mobs lynched 4,742 blacks, with the turn-of-the-century being the high-water mark for these crimes, with “two or three black southerners [being] hanged, burned at the stake, or quietly murdered every week.” The 1890s, for instance, were scene to about 139 lynchings a year, 75 percent of which were black (Litwack 12). For many marginalized Americans, everyday life was a trial.

Mormons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not victimized nearly as much as these groups, although they experienced their share of persecution and violence, particularly in the South, where Mormon missionaries were attacked and shot to death in 1879 and 1884. Generally, their association with polygamy and other forms of non-conformity provided fodder for stereotypes that served as justification for prejudice and legislative persecution. In the 1860 *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States*, for example, the Surgeon General’s Office published a report on the Army’s

outpost in Utah that described in horrifying detail the degenerating effects of polygamy on Mormons and their offspring. In the report, its author, Roberts Bartholow, an Assistant Surgeon General, characterized Mormons as “human animals” that had, through polygamy, “arrived at a physical and mental condition, in a few years of growth, such as [...] hereditary victims of all the vices of civilization, have been ages in reaching.” Polygamy, he believed, had produced what “may be styled the Mormon expression and style”:

an expression compounded of sensuality, cunning, suspicion, and a smirking self-conceit. The yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage; the greenish-colored eyes; the thick, protuberant lips; the low forehead; the light, yellowish hair; and the lank angular person, constitute an appearance so characteristic of the new race, the production of polygamy, as to distinguish them at a glance.

Significantly, Bartholow’s anxieties about this “new race” were grounded less in the moral impropriety of polygamy than the degenerating effect it had on the racial integrity of those who became Mormons and intermarried with the existing Mormon population, thus perpetuating its “physical degeneracy” (Coolidge 301-302). As the century progressed, this image of Mormon degeneration (or something like it) carried over into other genres, perpetuating and popularizing the image of the Mormon as something dangerous and subhuman. Like other American minority groups, including Catholics, Mormons became victims of gross, bigoted caricatures in nativist presses across the nation, which only aggravated American public opinion against the Mormons and further propagated negative stereotypes (See Davis, Givens).

But anti-Mormonism was not limited to American print culture. Following the Civil War, the anti-polygamy crusade became the new *cause célèbre*, resulting in such legislation and Supreme Court rulings as the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act (1862), the Poland Act (1874), *Reynolds*

v. United States (1878), and the Edmund Act (1882), all of which sought to curtail Mormon polygamy and political influence. Even the highest authority of the land, President Grover Cleveland, joined in the campaign, declaring in his 1885 State of the Union Address that he would be “glad to approve further discreet legislation as will rid the country of this blot [i.e. polygamy] upon its fair fame.” Championing laws that would “prevent the importation of Mormons into the country,” he insisted that Mormons were undesirables, cheaters of the American system who used republican government to foster a marriage system that undermined not only the principles upon which the government was founded, but also the homes and families that safeguarded them. Subsequent legislation in the form of the Edmund-Tucker Act (1887), along with the Supreme Court ruling *The Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States* (1890) that upheld it, sought to end this cheating by disenfranchising Mormon women and polygamous Mormon men, further criminalizing their behavior, and disincorporating their church. These efforts were largely successful in breaking Mormonism’s back. Throughout the 1880s, many Mormon men, including several prominent church leaders, were imprisoned; others, like ailing church president John Taylor, left their families and went into permanent hiding. By 1890, three years after Taylor’s death, and facing intense pressure from the federal government, Mormon leaders were finally ready for change, officially disavowing polygamy and setting their followers on a course for greater assimilation with mainstream America.

Interestingly, Mormons were not the only marginalized people who responded to prejudice by seeking greater assimilation with their persecutors. Facing this climate of nativism and racism, marginalized groups that could often sought to prove their compatibility with WASP America through a variety of accommodation measures and strategies. (Booker T. Washington’s

controversial Atlanta Exposition speech of 1895 is one famous example.) Along with the Mormons, Jews and African Americans endeavored to prove their Americanness through increased engagement with the dominant culture, and creative writing, particularly, became a venue for facing the challenge of assimilation. As Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., and Robert E. Hogan have shown, ethnic Americans at the turn of the century saw writing as a way to “free themselves from mainstream impositions, stereotypical self-images, and other such limitations placed upon their field of creativity” (8). Further, Catharine Rottenberg has shown how the novel, particularly, became a venue where Jewish and African-American writers could work out their American identities, “meditating on the desirability of fitting into hegemonic U.S. society,” and “dramatiz[ing] the ways that these minority groups attempted to move from margin to center by carving out a niche for themselves in mainstream U.S. society” (1-2).

This study, in part, shows how Mormon novelists participated in this work, appropriating the novel as one way to mediate their strained relationship with mainstream society. Of course, that they used the novel at all is surprising, considering it did not initially have a ready reception among the Mormons. In an 1853 sermon, to be sure, Mormon leader Brigham Young argued that it was profitable for children to read novels because they “tend[ed] to expand their frames, add fire to their spirits, improve their minds, and make them feel free and untrammelled in body and mind” (“Organization” 94). By 1862, however, his tolerance for novels was wearing thin. While he admitted that he “would rather that persons read novels than read nothing,” he harshly criticized Mormon women who “would rather read a trifling, lying novel than read history, the Book of Mormon, or any other useful print.” “Such women [were] not worth their room,” he reasoned, counseling them to “read on, and get the spirit of lying in which [novels] are written, and then lie on until [they] find [them]selves in hell” (“Remarks” 173-174). While influential in

its time, this attitude began to weaken in the late 1880s as the novel increased in popularity and influential church members began to extol its virtues. As critic Richard H. Cracroft notes, the transition away from its nineteenth-century radicalism in the 1890s helped Mormonism warm to the novel, especially as “a new generation of Latter-day Saints desired to downplay their ‘peculiar people’ status and assimilate into mainstream America without [...] compromising the integrity of the restored gospel” (“Cows” 125). Rebecca De Schweinitz, likewise, notes that the change came about as “LDS leaders realized that despite the church’s position, Mormon youth *liked* to read fiction” and fiction had the potential to “guard the youth of Zion, harness the power of the press, the creativity of its members, and further encourage self-reliance” (29). More specifically, they saw in fiction a medium through which writers born and reared in Mormonism could construct a new Mormon identity from the ashes of the old one. Not only could it preach good morals and establish doctrine as well or better than any sermon, it could also provide ideal models for what it meant to be a Mormon man or woman at the dawn of the twentieth century. In a sense, what these early advocates saw in fiction was a popular medium through which they could engage mainstream American culture while still preserving and promoting Mormon ideals and principles.³

Interestingly, among the many ways marginalized groups appropriated the novel form in the late nineteenth century was by appropriating successful genres. This was true with the utopian novel, for instance, which had become incredibly popular thanks to Edward Bellamy’s best-selling *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888). Indeed, between the publication of Bellamy’s novel and the turn of the century, around 172 utopian novels were published in America, with at least 129 more published by 1920. With these were a number of novels by writers from America’s margins—particularly African-American, Jewish, and women writers—who had

written either directly or indirectly in response to Bellamy's work. Among the most enduring of these novels were Frances Harper's *Iola LeRoy* (1892), Solomon Schindler's *Young West* (1894), Sutton E. Griggs' *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), Henry Pereira Mendes' *Looking Ahead* (1900), David Lubin's *Let There Be Light* (1900), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915). While these authors were "exceptions" to the predominately "Protestant, native American [i.e. American-born], white, male, and middle-aged" demographic that usually wrote utopian novels, they represented an important counterpoint to the developing tradition, reflecting a desire among marginalized Americans for greater recognition of their contributions in mainstream dialogues. As M. Guilia Fabi argues about African-American utopian novels, the genre not only gave "oppressed people" a way "to imagine a better future," but also an opportunity to subvert a genre that had become "an important playground for the racist, eugenicist, and segregationist discourse of white writers" who had become anxious about their place in America's hegemonic order (45). Moreover, it gave them "an aggressive fictional means of community building" where they could "[transform] a contemporary dystopian historical reality of racial violence, segregation, and disenfranchisement" into a hopeful "vision of liberation and empowerment that acquired inspirational value by expanding the 'horizon of expectations' of the readers" (46, 48). Similarly, Alessa Johns notes that the genre also allowed women, long marginalized by men who claimed to "cherish" and "honor" them, to write themselves into national debates, where they were often denied a voice, giving them a popular cultural mode through which they could propose "thought experiment[s]" that "alter[ed] people's perceptions" and allowed them to carry out the deviant work of replicating "women's own situation" of social subordination through "ambiguous" narratives of "lost outsiders in disorienting worlds" (175). Just as importantly, though, the genre allowed groups to work out problems within their own communities as they

faced their unique challenges with assimilation. Indeed, as Justin Nordstrom shows, the novels gave Jewish writers “a vehicle for extending and exacerbating emergent conflicts within Judaism” over questions of Jewish assimilation, granting them intellectual space to “reflect [on] existing problems” within their communities in order to imagine better “formulas for how the nineteenth-century world could be modified and improved” (276, 291).

Mormons, likewise, experimented with the utopian novel as a way to meditate on their place in and gain access to mainstream America. Benjamin E. Rich’s *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City*, “*That Mormon*” (1893), which was possibly the first Mormon novel published in book form, took a utopian approach in its narrative of Charles Durant, a Mormon missionary in the town of Westminster, Tennessee. Like *Iola LeRoy*, *Mr. Durant* is a utopian novel set in the present and structured around a series of didactic parlor discussions. The subject of these discussions is always Mormon doctrine (particularly its divergence from—and superiority to—Protestant Christianity) as well as the character and history of the Mormon people. Durant, ever knowledgeable about his church, guides his enthralled listeners through the Mormon world as a way to demonstrate its value to the modern world. At the end of the novel, a Mr. Brown, moved by Durant’s teachings, travels through Utah and gives a glowing report of its organization, engineering, and industry, casting the Mormon people in a distinctly utopian light:

“I see on every side among the Mormons, people who are honest in their convictions, who have a living faith and put their faith and teachings into practice, who are industrious and thrifty, kind to the poor, sober, virtuous. There are no signs of abject poverty anywhere in this city, and much less among the hundreds of country settlements; idleness is discountenanced by the Mormons, until among them as a people there are no beggars, tramps or drones. (279)

At least one other utopian novel immediately followed *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City*, Nephi Anderson's *Added Upon* (1898), an idiosyncratic and experimental novel that contains a long section that owes a clear debt to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (see Chapter Two). Like *Mr. Durant*, *Added Upon* often reads more like an instructional resource for missionaries than a novel, yet its fictional portrait of a world remade and perfected through Mormonism at once engages mainstream debates and culture while insisting upon the import and validity of its own contribution. Indeed, like the utopias of the marginalized writers above, these early Mormon utopian novels write back to the predominately white male Protestant tradition with alternative and altogether overlooked views of better societies.

Considering the utopian genre's late-nineteenth-century popularity, the interest Mormon writers like Rich and Anderson took in it is unsurprising and, in many ways, unremarkable. At the same time, however, these writers approached the genre already steeped in a tradition of utopian experimentation that set them apart, in many ways, from other marginalized groups who likewise appropriated the genre, however briefly, at the turn of the century. Nephi Anderson, for example, the author of *Added Upon*, lived and worked in Brigham City, the location of one of the most successful instances of cooperative living in nineteenth-century America. Writing under the pseudonym "Scriptus" for the *Deseret Evening News* in April 1897, in fact, Anderson reviewed Edward Bellamy's *Equality* (1897), the sequel to *Looking Backward*, with special attention to its consonance with Mormon utopian principles:

The work deals with those high ideals of socialism which so charmed the reader in *Looking Backward*. Mr. Bellamy's book came as a sort of revelation to the world. Yet over fifty years before the law of consecration [i.e. Mormonism's law of cooperative living] was revealed to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the world has had ample opportunity to know about it. Mr. Bellamy's man made scheme following somewhat the revealed law on the same subject, received the wonder and applause of the world: the heaven revealed order makes no stir, receives no attention. What a strange order of things! (8)

For him, as well as for other Mormons, the utopian genre provided more than a venue for thought experiments; it provided means for showing Mormonism's deeply-rooted ideals, principles, and practices carried out to the fullest and purest capacity.

Still, even with their historical commitment to utopianism, Mormons lost interest in the utopian genre in tandem with the general decline of interest in the genre across the nation, and, like other marginalized groups, Mormons found other ways to use the novel to engage the dominant culture. Even without the conventions of the utopian genre, however, their commitment to utopian principles remained apparent in their writings, although often in more subdued ways. This study of the Mormon novel seeks to identify traces of this commitment in works since *Added Upon*, the first Mormon-written novel to achieve lasting popularity among its own people. In doing so, I pay particular attention to the beginning and end of the twentieth century--not simply because they were eras of abundant Mormon creative output, but because of the way these decades mark times of greatest tension between Mormons and their mainstream hosts. Indeed, as subsequent chapters will show, both the early- and late-twentieth century were times of shifting values in the United States, turbulent eras that forced Mormons to evaluate and renegotiate their relationship to the dominate culture. How the Mormon novel has participated as a site of mediation for such negotiations over the years, particularly the way it has sought to reconfigure understandings of Mormon utopianism in respect to broader cultural trends, is the

subject of this study. Crucial to understanding this study, however, is also the history of nineteenth-century Mormon utopianism and utopian literature, which, I endeavor to claim, underwrite much of the Mormon novel's epistemological concerns since its inception at the turn of the century. It seems significant, after all, that the Mormon novel emerged only after it became clear that the golden age of Mormon utopianism was coming to an end. In a sense, then, it was born at a time when it could serve as a site where Mormon utopianism could be preserved and perpetually reshaped to respond to the ongoing and evolving challenge of assimilation.

Zion: A Brief History of Mormon Utopianism

Mormonism began in upstate New York in the first half of the nineteenth-century. Agitated by the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, its founder, Joseph Smith, went into a grove of trees in the Spring of 1820 and had a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ. In the vision, the heavenly "personages" forbade him from joining any church, explaining that all churches were an "abomination" and the world's religious leaders "corrupt" (Joseph Smith-History 1:19). Three years later, without any further contact with divinity, Smith had another vision, this time of an angel named Moroni who told him "that God had a work for [him] to do," directing him to an ancient record, written on golden plates, buried near a hill near his home. After retrieving the record—a lengthy process that took some four years—Smith translated and published it as the Book of Mormon, a complex narrative that purports to be a history of three civilizations that existed on the American continent before Columbus. Moreover, in addition to the Book of Mormon, Smith also received other communications from God, revelations for both himself and his friends, which he recorded, collected, and later published as the Doctrine and Covenants.

On 6 April 1830, shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Smith organized the “Church of Christ,” the forerunner of today’s Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. During the service, Smith dictated a revelation from God that proclaimed him to be “a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, [and] an elder of the church”—the Lord’s chosen mouthpiece “to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good” (D&C 21.1, 6-7). In the coming months and years, as the young prophet embraced each of these roles with charismatic determination, his method of moving “the cause of Zion” would evolve as his personal understanding of “Zion,” a biblical name often used in association with faraway Jerusalem, developed into something more concretely American and intrinsically indebted to a millennial worldview and the culture of utopian experimentation of Smith’s day. At this early stage of the church’s growth, however, “Zion” remained vague and undefined in Joseph Smith’s earliest revelatory writings—even as these writings frequently used the word interchangeably with the “kingdom of God.” This would remain the case in early Mormon discourse until an influx of new converts in northeastern Ohio—the results of the Mormons’ first long-distance missionary efforts—drew the prophet and his followers westward to a village named Kirtland. Once there, Smith recorded a number of revelations that greatly expanded the meaning of “Zion,” clarified Mormon eschatology, and rearticulated the Church’s relationship to the rest of the nation. Central to these communications was a large-scale plan to build the City of Zion, a utopian community where cooperation and faith were to be the divinely-appointed *modus operandi*. This plan would consume Smith for the rest of his life, and his tireless efforts to build Zion, despite failure and disappointment, became a hallmark of his career.

Smith’s grand plan, to be sure, was not uncommon in his day. In the 1830s, Northeastern Ohio was a hub of antebellum millennial fervor and utopian communities.⁴ For instance, German

separatists groups like the Zoarites and Rappites, Lutheran dissidents who traced their origins back to the theological writings of Jakob Böhme, had communities south of Canton and north of Pittsburgh respectively (Rokicky 53-56). Further north, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, or Shakers, established their North Union community just east of Cleveland in what is today Shaker Heights. Kirtland, where Joseph Smith settled in 1831, was situated some fifteen miles northeast of this community. There, various residents of the village and several from the surrounding area were experimenting in communal living, including many who would later affiliate with Joseph Smith (Bowman 42, Van Wagoner 50). The chief advocate of this group—they called themselves the “Family,” the “Big Family,” or “Morley’s Family”—became Smith’s most enthusiastic and influential convert in the region, thirty-eight year old Sidney Rigdon, a former Baptist and Campbellite minister, whose interest in communal living began with his early exposure to Rappites and Shakers near his Pittsburgh home (Rust 15, Rokicky 92, Brooke 207, Van Wagoner 50-51). Once a follower of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, the American Restorationist ministers and founders of the Disciples of Christ, Rigdon broke with them over, among other things, disagreements about the merits of communal living.⁵ Like many of his day, Rigdon knew of the communal efforts of primitive Christianity and believed that their reimplementation would speed the return of Jesus Christ and usher in a millennial paradise.⁶

Fawn M. Brodie, one of Joseph Smith’s biographers, points to Sidney Rigdon, and his fervent belief in Christian communalism, as the catalyst for Smith’s own interest in the practice (105). While this influence is indisputable, Smith—like so many of his contemporaries—was hardly a stranger to utopian communalism by the time he made Kirtland his home. A reader of the New Testament, Smith was aware of the account in Acts 4 of early Christian communalists

who sold their “lands or houses” and “laid [their earnings] down at the apostles’ feet” for “distribution [...] unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4.34-45, see 32-37). Also, at the time he organized his church in 1830, at least two communes existed within a forty mile radius of his home near Palmyra, New York—the Groveland Shaker community to the northeast and Jemima Wilkinson’s New Jerusalem community to the South (Hayden 106). In fact, more than sixty such communes were established in America between 1730 and 1830, and more than thirty were still in operation when Smith left New York for Kirtland (Stockwell 233-234). In Canada, Smith even had an uncle, Jason Mack, who established a commune “on a tract of land” in New Brunswick for “the purpose of assisting poor persons to the means of sustaining themselves.” According to Smith’s mother, Lucy, Jason Mack directed the labors of “some thirty families” in his commune and sold whatever “they raised [...] and wished to sell” in markets as far away as Liverpool (50).⁷

Antebellum interest in communalism had its roots in the Puritan experience, a legacy Smith inherited from his parents, whose Massachusetts forbearers included John and Tillie Howland, *Mayflower* Pilgrims, and Samuel Smith, a Salem witch accuser (Rust 25; Bushman “Rough Stone” 14). According to Donald E. Pitzer, these forebears primarily adopted communal practices as a way to survive the privations of their first three years in Plymouth Colony, rather than as an outgrowth of their millennialism. Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, however, evoked millennialistic rhetoric when he called upon another group of Puritan colonists a decade later to make their new American home a beacon for the world (6). As outlined famously in his 1630 sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” Winthrop imagined the Puritan community as a people who “must be knit together” in the work of God “as one man”:

We must entertain each other in brotherly affection, we must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other's necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other, make other's conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body.⁸

For Winthrop, such mutual commitment was meant particularly to be a reflection of the colony's greater commitment to God, the one true path to the ideal community. "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill," Winthrop reminded them. "The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world" (105). In a sense, John Winthrop and the *Arabella* Puritans saw themselves as the world's last chance. By entering into a covenant with each other and with God, they believed that they could lay the foundation for a cooperation-based community that could show the world how to be a people with enough divine "wisdom, power, goodness, and truth" to transform society in a positive, permanent way (105).⁹

Within this context, Joseph Smith's investments in millennialism and communal utopianism are unsurprising. That Smith also came of age against the backdrop of the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830), the revivalist movement that advanced the notion that society itself could be changed, improved, and placed "in harmony with God's will," further places Smith in contact with millennialist and utopian ideals (Berry 10-11).¹⁰ In fact, as a child of the "burned-over district," the highly evangelized region of western New York during the Second

Great Awakening, Joseph Smith would later credit the “war of words and tumult of opinions” of the era as the catalyst for his first theophany in 1820, an event Mormons refer to as the First Vision (“History” 4). While the earliest account of this experience is charged with the millennial undercurrents of the day, it says nothing about communalism or other utopian outgrowths of millennial thought. However, it does present a dualistic view of the world—common in millennialism—wherein the Kingdom of God is at odds with Babylon, or the sinful “inhabitants of the earth” (Underwood 8-9, 24). Later, in some of Smith’s earliest revelations, this dualism would be a central part of the rationale behind the organization of the new church—and the building of a utopian community.

Among these early revelations, none sparked Mormonism’s millennial-utopian imagination more than Smith’s “inspired revision” of the King James Bible. Begun shortly after the Church’s organization, the “inspired revision”—which Mormons today call the “Joseph Smith Translation”—was meant to be a “recovery of the original” biblical text, which Smith believed had become corrupted over the centuries. When the newly-baptized Sidney Rigdon arrived in New York to meet Smith for the first time, the prophet was in the process of “translating” the first part of Genesis, and he and his other scribes had already begun a long digression involving Enoch, a minor biblical figure who appears in only eight verses in the Old and New Testaments, but in 110 verses in Smith’s revision (“Rough Stone” 132-133, 138, Van Wagoner 71-74). Significantly, after Rigdon took over as scribe, the Enoch narrative casts the biblical patriarch not only as a fiery preacher-prophet, but also as the founder of the earth’s first utopian community. Indeed, as American utopians strove to do in the nineteenth century, Enoch establishes a land where his followers “dwelt in righteousness” away from the “wars and bloodshed” that terrorize the rest of the world. Together they flourish such that the Lord calls

them “ZION;” they become a people “of one heart and one mind” who “dwell in righteousness” and have “no poor among them.” Ultimately, this people build a city, which they call “the City of Holiness, even ZION,” which “in the process of time” is “taken up unto heaven” to be with God and spared the destruction that rains down upon the wicked world (Moses 7:17-21).

If the Enoch narrative’s dualistic view of humanity as separated into righteous and wicked camps, along with its emphasis on the rapture-like ascension of the City of Zion, seems millennialist in tone, then Enoch’s later vision of the last days, which is also part of Smith’s inspired digression, only makes the connection more explicit. Indeed, with his city now in heaven, Enoch witnesses a future day when “the heavens shall be darkened” and “great tribulations shall be among the children of men.” As in his day, Enoch learns, the Lord’s people in the latter days will be preserved and truth and righteousness will be sent from heaven “to bear testimony of [the] Only Begotten” and made “to sweep the earth as with the flood, to gather out [the] elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which [the Lord] shall prepare, an Holy City [...] called Zion, a New Jerusalem.” Eventually, Enoch’s Zion will descend and merge with the new latter-day Zion and the righteous of old will rejoice with their new brothers and sisters in a reunion of millennial bliss:

Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom and they shall us see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; and there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come fourth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. (Moses 7:60-64)

Like many American Protestants before him, Smith understood apocalyptic prophecy literally—particularly prophecy that came from his own mouth. Accordingly, upon arriving in Kirtland in January 1831, Smith began making preparations to establish a community worthy of joining with Enoch’s in the last days.¹¹ In February, he recorded a revelation that commanded church members to “remember the poor” and make a covenant to “consecrate” their property to the bishop of the church for the support of the needy. The bishop, in turn, was commanded to redistribute the property as a “stewardship” to individuals within the order, which stewardship would be sufficient to cover the living needs of the individual’s family. The “residue,” or surplus property, would remain in reserve in a “storehouse” for any additional needs the “poor and the needy” may require and for the temporal needs of the church proper (D&C 42.30-37). In this system, “all things” were to be “done in cleanliness before [the Lord].” Members were to be hardworking contributors. “Thou shalt not be idle,” the revelation admonished; “for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer” (D&C 42.42). Nor were they to have strife among them, but rather they were to live together in love” and “weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection” (D&C 42.45). Most important for those who bristled under the ambiguities of the old “Family” system, previously in place in Kirtland, the new revelation directed that those who were to abide under this law were to “stand in the place of [their] stewardship” and not encroach upon or appropriate the stewardship of another:

Thou shalt not take thy brother’s garment thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother. And if thou obtainest more than that which would be for thy support, thou shalt give it into my storehouse, that all things may be done according to that which I have said. (D&C 42.53-55)¹²

Mormons attempted to live according to this revealed law, which they called the Law of Consecration, from 1831 to 1833. Due to lack of order and planning, however, not to mention the poverty of the Mormons and the opposition they faced from their non-Mormon neighbors, the system did not work (May 141-142). Neither did their plans to build a holy city of peace and economic equality in Jackson County, Missouri, which a 20 July 1831 revelation had designated to be “the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion” (D&C 57.12, see 57.1-3). Indeed, on 25 July 1833, nearly two years after laying the first log of the new “City of Zion” in Jackson Country, Missouri, Smith sent a city plan from Kirtland to the struggling Missouri leadership. The plan, which Smith titled “The Plat for the City of Zion,” proposed an ambitious city of wide intersecting streets laid out in an orderly grid, but, much to Smith’s disappointment, this utopian dream also never fully materialized.¹³ By mid-November 1833, the Missouri Mormons had to cease this utopian project when they were forcibly exiled from their homes in Zion and compelled to seek refuge in nearby Clay County.

The Law of Consecration fared no better in Kirtland, and the law as outlined in Smith’s revelations was never strictly followed as it proved too difficult and impractical under the Mormons’ impoverished condition. Mormon communalist experimentation subsequently tapered off during Joseph Smith’s final years, but it found new life in Utah under Brigham Young. In and around the Intermountain West, Mormons founded ninety-six settlements in the 1850s, 150 in the 1860s, and 120 in the 1870s (Berry 75). Brigham Young believed strongly in independence and self-sufficiency—especially from the federal government that had offered Mormons little assistance during their troubles in Missouri and Nauvoo—and encouraged his followers to strengthen local industry and refrain from doing business with outsiders (76). In the 1850s, spurred by a spirit of revivalism called the “Reformation” and a string of crop failures that

devastated the Utah economy, Young even encouraged his followers to live communally and recommit to the Law of Consecration. These efforts did not generally succeed, however, possibly due to the crisis surrounding the Utah War of 1857-58.¹⁴ Yet Young renewed his push toward Mormon economic self-sufficiency in the 1860s with his advocacy of community cooperatives. Centralized around a local retail store, these cooperatives sold affordable shares in the business—around five to ten dollars per share—which could be purchased in cash or commodities and the profits used to fund other cooperative enterprises, like sawmills, tanneries, or textile mills. These enterprises, in turn, employed workers—often shareholders in the cooperative—to produce goods that would be sold at the retail store or used in the productions of goods that would be sold there. In total, the Mormons created some 150 cooperatives, the most successful of which was Brigham City, which achieved 85 percent self-sufficiency (May 146-147). As these communities were often deeply committed to the principle of polygamy in addition to utopian communalism, however, they became a target for federal marshals who came to Utah to enforce the Edmunds Act of 1882, an anti-polygamy law that severely crippled the Mormons' ability to maintain their communities. Moreover, the unrest of the younger generation and the prosperity of surrounding towns, which had become rich from nearby silver mines, also contributed to their demise. ("Great Basin" 333-337, May 149-150). When LDS Church President Wilford Woodruff officially called an end to the practice of polygamy in 1890, he also sapped the utopian energies of many of his people.

Literary Utopian Precedents of the Mormon Novel

As one would expect, this tradition of Mormon millennial utopianism is reflected in their creative writing, particularly their poetry. The first published examples of Mormon poetry were printed in early Mormon newspapers like *The Evening and the Morning Star* (1832-1834), *The*

Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate (1834-1837), and *Times and Seasons* (1839-1847).

In general, these early publications ran at least one or two anonymous poems or hymns per month—some authored by Mormons, some not—and these often treated a combination of the themes of Zion, the Millennium, and the Second Coming of Christ. For example, in the first issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, the Mormon newspaper published in their makeshift utopia in Missouri, five “hymns” appear, each of which looks forward to the promised return of Christ and the establishment of Zion prior to the millennium. The first hymn, “What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling,” an original Mormon hymn penned by W. W. Phelps, the editor of the paper, follows familiar imagery from Revelation—standard millennialist material—in imagining the church as “the fair bride of the Savior,” whom it conflates with the woman in Revelation 12 who flees into the wilderness seeking refuge from the dragon (see Revelation 12:1-6, 19.7-8):

What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling,

Looking for Christ, the belov’d of her heart?

O this is the church, the fair bride of the Savior,

Which with every idol is willing to part. (lines 1-4)

Throughout the remainder of the poem, Phelps continues to rely upon biblical imagery while drawing upon the motifs of a sacred journey, exile, and exodus, which were common in early American hymnody (see Bohlman 8). Like the woman in Revelation, the saints of the church are “on their way home to glory” and “[d]etermin’d [...] to reach the blest land” where they can safely avoid the taunts of “Old formal professors” and “high-minded hypocrites,” and “rejoic[e] to see priest-craft fall” (lines 11-16). Reaching further back in biblical prophecy, the poem ends with an allusion to the vision described in Daniel 2 of the “Stone of the mountain” that “will

soon fill the earth” (lines 31-32). For Phelps, it is a hopeful promise of the global recompense the Saints will receive for their long, labored devotion to Christ.

As editor, Phelps likely selected “What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling” for the first issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star* because it presented a vision of the millennial state that accorded well with the millenarian world view he and other early Mormons espoused, which was itself influenced by the evangelical discourse of the day. As Grant Underwood points out, in fact, Mormons in the 1830s were much in tune to the “religious ethos in America at the time,” and “actually deviated little from the morals and mores of nineteenth-century evangelicalism” (10). As these hymns suggest, early Mormons acquired their millennial imagery either first- or second-hand from the same biblical passages Protestants appropriated. Moreover, they followed a tendency, which Stephen A. Marini identifies in most American evangelical hymnody, of “rely[ing] on classic British eighteenth century texts to express the unruly and often confusing tenet of the Second Coming of Christ” (141). Importantly, however, Mormon editors like Phelps would often modify the wording in hymns even further to give them a Mormon flavor. *The Evening and the Morning Star*’s version of Newton’s “Glorious things of thee are spoken,” for example, changes the original “On the rock of *ages* founded,/What can shake thy sure repose?” to “On the Rock of *Enoch* founded,/What can shake thy sure repose?” (lines 5-6, emphasis added) in order to connect the New Jerusalem of Revelation, the subject of Newton’s hymn, more explicitly to the Enoch of Joseph Smith’s “inspired revision” of the Bible (see Moses 7.18).

As Mormonism matured, distinctive elements of their theology began to color their utopian expressions more. When she gathered hymns for the first Mormon hymnal in 1835, Emma Smith, the Prophet’s wife, followed the practice of *The Evening and Morning Star* and

other Mormon newspapers by including popular Protestant hymns and new Mormon hymns alike, many of which struck a decidedly utopian note. One of the most millennialist and utopian of these early Mormons hymns was “This earth was once a garden place,” also written by Phelps, published in *The Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* in June 1835, and later collected as “Hymn 23” in Emma Smith’s hymnal. In the hymn, Phelps references a place called “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” which one of Smith’s revelations from earlier in the year had identified as the spot where Adam, three years prior to his death, had “bestowed [...] his last blessing” upon the “residue of his posterity who were righteous” (D&C 107.53). While Smith himself said little to suggest this about Adam-ondi-Ahman, Phelps’ hymn envisions it as the setting of an Edenic, egalitarian civilization similar to Enoch’s Zion, which the hymn also references:

This earth was once a garden place,
With all her glories common;
And men did live a holy race,
And worship Jesus face to face,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

We read that Enoch walk’d with God,
Above the pow’r of Mammon:
While Zion spread herself abroad,
And saints and angels sung aloud
In Adam-ondi-Ahman

Her land was good and greatly blest,

Beyond old Israel's Canaan:
Her fame was known from east to west;
Her peace was great, and pure the rest
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come—
The Savior's second comin'—
When all the earth in glorious bloom,
Affords the saints a holy home
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Typical of early nineteenth-century millenarian expression, “This earth was once a garden place” looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ as a time when the Saints will have a home apart from “mammon.” Yet it also draws upon a distinctly Mormon adaptation of the Christian mythos to recast history as a narrative of paradise lost and regained: Adam-ondi-Ahman, an ancient land where Adam and his posterity establish a post-Edenic egalitarian civilization, acquires “fame [...] from east to west,” falls, and becomes a saints’ dream of “days to come” when the “glorious bloom” of Adam-ondi-Ahman will be restored to the earth. In doing so, it endeavors to assert—more so than, say, the largely derivative “What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling”—a Mormon identity founded upon a millennial-utopian vision comprised of elements (Enoch, Adam-ondi-Ahman) unique to the Mormon eschatology.¹⁵

Mormon utopian expression took an additional form in the 1840s under the hand of Parley P. Pratt, a Mormon apostle whose poem collection, *The Millennium, a Poem to Which Is Added Hymns and Songs on Various Subjects, Few and Interesting, Adapted to the Dispensation*

of the Fulness of Times (1835), was the first single-author book of Mormon literature published. An ardent millennialist, Pratt wrote two works of short utopian fiction, “The Angel of the Prairie: A Dream of the Future” (1843-1844) and “One Hundred Years Hence, 1945” (1845), both of which describe visions of the Millennium that follow in the tradition of Cotton Mather’s *Theopolis Americana: An Essay on the Golden Street of the Holy City* (1710), with tropes borrowed from works like Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836), the first utopian American novel to use the technique of transporting a character into the future via sleep (Nydahl 276). Of the two stories, only “One Hundred Years Hence” was published in Pratt’s lifetime, appearing in the 10 September 1845 issue of *The Nauvoo Neighbor*. According to Pratt’s son, Abinadi, “The Angel of the Prairie” was not published until 1879, long after Pratt’s death, although it had been read “in a Council of the Church, in the presence of the Prophet Joseph Smith” in the Winter of 1843-44, when the Mormons were settled in Nauvoo, Illinois (“Angel,” Preface). Like the Mormon utopian poetry of the era, the stories paint a glowing vision of Zion as well as a horrifying picture of the state of Babylon. “One Hundred Years Hence,” in fact, ends with the narrator looking upon the wickedness of the world from the safe vantage point of Zion:

One look, and the soul sickened. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what folly, corruptions, and abominations are wrought among men to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the cunning of the devil.

The consequence of this harrowing view is that the narrator awakes from the sleep that had transported him one hundred years into the future “perfectly enamored with the beauty and glory of Zion *to be*” and committed to making it a reality (145). Like Edgar Hastings, the protagonist of *Three Hundred Years Hence*, the narrator of Pratt’s story is remade by his utopian dream. The

present, once enough for the time-traveling dreamer, now appears cruel, barbaric, and hopelessly fallen. Only the utopian future, with its glimmering Zion, promises a time without “‘a Canaanite in the land,’ nor anything to hurt or destroy in all the Holy Mountain” (145).

After failing to establish permanent utopian communities in Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois, the Mormons relocated to the Intermountain West in 1847 and drew upon their earlier utopian ideals to found Salt Lake City and other settlements. Meanwhile, the term “Zion” became more ambiguous as it evolved to mean both the abandoned New Jerusalem in Missouri and the Mormon community in the Utah Territory. Interestingly, one of the consequences of this ambiguity is a tendency to superimpose the attributes of the “ideal” Zion on the “real” one, making a utopia of the Saints’ frontier settlement. Such a tendency is apparent in Eliza R. Snow’s “To a Sister Abroad,” an 1850s-era poem that encourages an unnamed woman to gather with the Saints in the Utah Zion:

Come, come here and dwell with the Saints of God—

Come, partake of the fountains which flow from heav’n;

Where the light of truth freely spreads abroad

And the sweet peace of God to the heart is giv’n.

[...]

Dear Sister, no longer in Babylon roam,

Where the accents of friendship and truth are few:

In the midst of the Saints in our mountain home,

The purest of hearts fondly beat for you. (lines 1-4, 17-20)

The idyllic picture of Utah that Snow draws for her reader in these lines is, to be sure, a far cry from the rustic settlement it was in the first decade of the Mormon’s occupancy. Snow, however,

deliberately heightens the beauty of the Saints' "mountain home" to contrast it with Babylon, where "the accents of friendship and truth are few"; again assert a unique Mormon identity over against Babylon, its antithesis; and establish the dualism that was so crucial to the millennialist poetry of early Mormons and their contemporaries.

In other poems, however, Snow demonstrates more awareness of disconnects between the ideal society and her own. In her 1855 poem "A Word to the Saints Who Are Gathering," for instance, she addresses the influx of European converts who were in the process of gathering to the Utah Territory, warning them that the Zion in the American West is not the abstract utopia of scripture, but a "furnace" designed to "purify" them with the realities of hardship:

Think not, when you gather to Zion

Your troubles and trials are through—

That nothing but comfort and pleasure

Are waiting in Zion for you.

No, no; 'tis designed as a furnace,

All substance, all textures to try—

To consume all the "wood, hay, and stubble,"

And the gold from the dross purify. (lines 1-8)

With these lines, Snow seeks to disassociate the concept of Zion with the notion of a fully-realized ideal community by making a refinery of utopia. While still firmly committed to the idea of Zion-as-ideal-community, Snow nevertheless rejects the "comfort and pleasure" of traditional utopian imagery to conceptualize Zion as an ongoing process of creative social betterment. In a sense, she asks "the Saints Who Are Gathering" to think beyond the unproductive limits of their own (and often culturally-prescribed) utopian imaginations to understand Zion as more than its

teleological promises. As we see in “A Word to the Saints Who Are Gathering,” Zion becomes almost synonymous not with relaxation and comfort, but with a kind of creative cooperative labor:

Think not, when you gather to Zion,
The Saints here have nothing to do
But attend to your personal welfare,
And always be comforting you.
No; the Saints who are faithful are doing
What their hands find to do, with their might;
To accomplish the gath’ring of Israel,
They are toiling by day and by night. (lines 17-24)¹⁶

While Snow’s Zion-as-Furnace motif became standard in Mormon poetry of the second half of the nineteenth century, idealized portraits of Utah and the City of Zion remained a staple of Mormon utopian expression. For instance, Emmeline B. Wells, another prominent nineteenth-century Mormon poet, idealized Utah in her poem “Peaceful Vales,” which figures the “Grand and noble” Rocky Mountains as “nature’s bulwarks” raised to protect “the pleasant valleys” of Zion. The poem especially presents Utah as a mountain land of peace, happiness, and rest:

Peaceful vales where Saints may dwell,
And praise the God of Israel;
While happy children join and sing,
Glory to the Heavenly King.

And the angels of Jehovah

Watch forever on the towers,
That, like sentinels are stationed
Round this glorious land of ours,
Which the Saints in peace inherit
As their resting place foretold,
Where they gather round the standard,
And the flag of truth unfold. (lines 9-20)

As these and other poems suggest, representations of Zion in the writings of late nineteenth-century Mormons could be contradictory in their application of utopianism. On the one hand, they could cast a utopian glow over Utah in a way that could attract new converts, yet obscure the difficulties of frontier life and fosters unrealistic expectations. On the other hand, they could encourage the Mormons to view Zion as a trial-by-fire, which, if endured, could refine and perfect them as a community. In both instances, Zion promises something better than what the Mormons already have, which is an essential aspect of utopia dreaming. This tension between Zion-as-rest and Zion-as-labor, however, suggests that the essentially passive millennialism of their earlier years had reached an impasse with the realities of their exiled situation. The Saints, therefore, continued to long for and imagine an ideal community where they could live peacefully and safely as a chosen people while God punished the wicked; yet, they also realized that this community would not be handed to them. They would have to build it from the ground up, patiently, and not without additional trials.

One interesting trend to develop out of this impasse was a militant millennial utopianism that appropriated earlier millennial motifs as invectives against the Church's principal antagonist in the late nineteenth century, the United States government. Indeed, after a decade-long hiatus

from persecution following their relocation to Utah, the Mormons again faced intense opposition when the federal government adopted an aggressive agenda against polygamy and the Mormons' theocratic dominance of the Intermountain West. Under the direction of President James Buchanan, 5,000 U.S. troops marched to Utah in 1857 to occupy Salt Lake City and put down a rumored Mormon rebellion against federal authority. This so-called "Utah War" did little to end polygamy, but it did instate a non-Mormon governor in the territory and signal the beginning of the end of the Mormons' isolated mountain utopia. More effective were the legislative actions the government took in the coming decades, beginning with the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862 and the Poland Act of 1874, which outlawed polygamy and placed Utah territorial courts under the jurisdiction of the federal government. When these laws proved too ineffective, congress passed the Edmunds Act of 1882 and Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which further curtailed Mormon civil liberties. Combined, these laws stripped Utah women and polygamous men of their voting rights, disallowed polygamists from holding political office or serving on juries, forced legal wives to testify against their polygamous husbands in court, dissolved the Church's corporation status, allowed for the confiscation of most of the church's property, disinherited the children of polygamous unions, took control of the public school system, and enacted further measures to cripple Mormon power in the region (Leone 149-151, Alexander 4, Flake 28). The Church also lost two important Supreme Court battles—*Reynolds v. United States* (1879) and *The Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. United States* (1890)—which upheld these laws and left the Mormons feeling demoralized and deeply resentful. It was perhaps the darkest time in Mormon history, and it is not surprising that Mormon poets looked to the millennial utopia for hope, community cohesion, and revenge.

This is particularly true in the poetry of Orson F. Whitney, the preeminent poet of Mormonism's second generation, whose work frequently attacked the injustices of federal anti-Mormon legislation. His collection *The Poetical Writings of Orson F. Whitney: Poems and Poetic Prose* (1889) was released at the height of federal opposition to Mormonism and polygamy, in fact, and published in part to help alter public opinion about the character of the Mormon people. As Whitney states in his preface:

it may be these humble songs will help dispel the dense cloud of prejudice and misapprehension hanging like a pall over the true history and character of my people, and show that the author of these lines, if he cannot create poetry, can at least admire it, and linger if not follow in the footsteps of those whose divine mission is to make the world more lovely and more lovable by producing it. That the name "Mormon" is not necessarily a synonym for coarseness and carnality, need not be told to those cognizant of the truth. (iii-iv)

Despite the meekness of these sentiments, *The Poetical Writings* offers no olive branch to the federal government or American people. For instance, one of the poems in the collection, "Lines on the Exodus," excoriates "Babylon"—a thinly-veiled reference to the United States—for the persecutions it has heaped upon "a modern Israel":

O Babylon! what streams of human blood
Unite to swell thy crimson-rolling flood!
The cry of millions, bound within thy thralls,
Deceived and lost, of God for vengeance calls;
The prayers of martyrs, murdered for the truth,
Appeals of widows for their orphaned youth,

The blood of innocence thy hand hath shed,
Pronounced a curse upon thy guilty head.
And thou shalt fall, and great thy fall shall be,
A ponderous mill-stone cast into the sea;
Eternal night shall shroud thee in its gloom,
And Truth shall triumph in thy day of doom. (lines 23-34)

This “day of doom,” of course, is the Second Coming, when modern Israel’s wrongs will be righted, and the law of Zion will bring a unifying order to a world long-oppressed by Babylon’s tyranny. For Whitney, the Second Coming and Millennium are the epitome of divine justice. Through these eschatological events, the wrongs the Mormons have experienced under corrupt federal laws will be righted as the wicked nation topples. Indeed, Whitney revels in the destruction of the wicked and pleas for the swift judgments of God:

“[...] Come, let us fly the judgments of that day,
When wickedness from earth shall pass away.
And all who answer not the warning call,
With Babylon must crumble in her fall.”
Thy virtue virtue’s votaries shall draw,
And out of Zion shall go forth the law,
Till all the nations under heaven’s sun
United are, eternally in one.
Thy dawn, thus “kindling to eternal day.”
Resplendent over all the earth shall sway. (lines 47-56)

In other poems in *The Poetical Writings*, Whitney wields his poet's pen and millennial convictions in similar defiance of the United States. In his poem "Waiting," Whitney longs for a day when the sons of Jehovah no longer have to "Lick the dust of Gentile feet" and see the laws of God "trampled/As the stone of yonder street?" (lines 9-12). He also decries the social inequalities that so troubled Joseph Smith and aches for the rise of "a glorious Zion" that would put an end to them. In an optimistic turn, the poem follows the conventions of earlier millennial expression to describe the "Day of Zion's glad redemption":

Freedom waves her joyous pinions

O'er a land, from sea to sea,

Bright with beams of heavenly glory,

Home of light and liberty;

O'er a people happy, holy,

Gifted now with every grace;

Free from self, that sordid fetter

That enslaves our fallen race.

Union, love and fellow-feeling—

These the watch-words of the hour;

Rich and poor in all things equal—

Righteousness their rock and tower. (lines 33-44)

The remainder of the poem celebrates Christ's expected victory over "mammon," another veiled reference to the United States. Culture overturns crudeness and faith and truth win out over the

“tyrant’s sceptre” and the “bigot’s power” (lines 49-50). The “future glory” of Zion also becomes visible: “Lovelier than painter’s limning,/Fairer than a poet’s dream,/Brighter than the noonday-splendor,/Or the midnight’s starry beam” (lines 77-80). As with its earliest predecessors, “Waiting” reaches back to biblical imagery and draws upon the standard journey motif to express the most basic utopian anticipation, a better future. It imagines “hope’s pilgrims, worn and weary” climbing “a craggy way” to “Greet the morn on glory’s hill-top,/When the night hath passed away!” (lines 89-92). Characterizing the Saints as an oppressed, enslaved, and downtrodden people, the poem assures them that they will find lasting peace from their oppressors if they can only hold out until the Millennium.

Toward a Theory of the Mormon Novel

History, of course, tells another story. Rather than holding out until the Millennium, the Mormons—threatened with incarcerations and the confiscation of their temples—reluctantly capitulated to federal laws and disavowed the practice of polygamy in the fall of 1890. In the thirty years following this policy change, Mormonism underwent radical changes that would alter the way Mormons thought about themselves and their utopian ideals. For instance, while they never abandoned their intentions to build the City of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, they came to talk less about returning to their holy land as the intensity of their millennialism dissipated into the twentieth century. As Underwood notes, “the brighter day majestically rising upon the world [took] longer than enthusiastic Latter-day Saints first expected,” and they, like the primitive Christians before them, moved on (139). Today, he observes, “talk about the end times” in Mormon congregations has “a detached and textbookish quality,” and the “social ramifications of [the Mormon] eschatology” are seldom a topic of conversations or Sunday school discussions (141-142). Likewise, the “more abrasive features of millenarianism”—which

informed much of the graphic imagery of Whitney's poetry—have all but disappeared behind ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, and a kinder view of the world's inhabitants (141-142). That more zealous era of Mormon millennialism has passed, as has the apocalyptic doomsaying.

Change is apparent in Mormon creative writing as well. While the Mormon literature that developed in the wake of this accommodation retained some aspects of its nineteenth-century utopian roots, especially its dualistic view of the world, hope for social betterment, and Zionism themes, its focus shifted at the turn of the century from a utopian mode, characterized by passionate millennialism, descriptions of concrete utopias, and deep mistrust of the non-Mormon world, to what I call a "post-utopian" mode, characterized by a more subdued millennialism, abstract utopian expression, and a far more ambivalent attitude toward outside influences. While this change occurred gradually in Mormon creative writing, an adequate starting point for it could be Orson F. Whitney's June 1888 sermon "Home Literature," one of the earliest articulations of a Mormon theory of literature. Speaking at a conference of Latter-day Saint youth, Whitney, then a Salt Lake City bishop, famously promised them that the Mormon people would "yet have Miltons and Shak[e]speares of [its] own" ("Home Literature" 300). More importantly, however, Whitney proposed a vision for Mormon literature that neither decried the immorality of "outsider" literature nor encouraged a myopic or cloistered aesthetic. Rather, he called on young Mormon to educate themselves, become familiar with the "best books" of the world, and use literature to promote Mormonism at home and abroad:

A world awaits you: rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned. All must be preached to; all must be sought after; all must be left without excuse. And whither we cannot go, we must send; where we cannot speak we must write; and in order to win men with our writings we must know how and what to write. If the

learned will only listen to the learned, God will send them learned men, to meet them on their own ground, and show them that "Mormonism," the Gospel of Christ, is not only the gospel of truth, but the gospel of intelligence and culture. The Lord is not above doing this [...] For over fifty years the gospel has been preached to the poor and lowly. It will yet go to the high and mighty, even to kings and nobles, and penetrate and climb to places hitherto deemed inaccessible.

Our literature will help to take it there; for this, like all else with which we have to do, must be made subservient to the building up of Zion. (299)

Evident in Whitney's words is frustration and longing to break the glass ceiling barring Mormons from mainstream acceptance among the "kings and nobles" of the dominant culture. For him, and likely others of his generation, the rejection of the "high" and "learned" was a sore spot, a source of class-based shame for the Mormon people, and implicit counterevidence to their alleged commitment to "intelligence and culture." Mormon Home Literature was to reverse this by serving as an emissary to the world's intellectual elite, offering alternatives to the grotesque images of Mormon ignorance and barbarism in the popular presses. Through its sophistication, Mormon literature was to affirm a "gospel of intelligence and culture," "penetrate" the hearts of "the learned," and build Zion from the top down.

Whitney's desire to win over the dominate culture through sophisticated literature was indicative of the ambivalence that pervaded his speech. Mormons were not to "live after the manner of the world," he argued, but instead "do the works of Abraham" (298). At the same time, however, they were to immerse themselves in the "best books" of the world, and "not merely [...] the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the book of Doctrine and Covenants, Church works and religious writings" (299). Furthermore, Mormon writers were to "be original":

No pouring of new wine into old bottles. No patterning after the dead forms of antiquity. Our literature must live and breathe for itself. Our mission is diverse from all others; our literature must also be. The odes of Anacreon, the satires of Horace and Juvenal, the epics of Homer, Virgil, Dante and Milton; the sublime tragedies of Shak[e]speare; these are all excellent, all well enough in their way; but we must not attempt to copy them. They cannot be reproduced. We may read, we may gather sweets from all these flowers, but we must build our own hive and honeycomb after God's supreme design. (300)

Almost in the same breath, though, Whitney challenged the youths to appeal to broader audiences, to “[w]rite for the papers, write for the magazines,” both locally and nationally, and “[m]ake books yourselves that shall not only be a credit to you and to the land and people that produced you, but likewise a boon and benefaction to mankind” (300-301). Mormons were to have “Miltons and Shak[e]speares of [their] own,” in terms of talent and prestige, but not in any imitative sense. Whitney’s was a distinctly post-utopian challenge: engage and revolutionize the contemporary literary world, write works that would appeal to broader audiences, but remain a peculiar people.

These words became a catalyst for a larger cultural push to develop works of “Home Literature” and establish Zion through creative writing. That Mormons turned increasingly toward fiction in this endeavor is significant as the novel, particularly, allowed Mormons ample imaginative space to explore the apparent ambivalence of Home Literature’s epistemological project. Indeed, as Mikhail Bakhtin has argued, the novel form itself is characterized by its openness to competing discourses and ability to serve “two speakers at the same time and [express] simultaneously two different intentions” and even “two world views” (324-325).¹⁷ For

him, novels are “double-voiced,” hybrid texts that “[bring] *different languages in contact with one another*” in an “*artistically organized*” fashion (324, 361).¹⁸ As subsequent chapters will show, this has certainly been the case for Mormon novels beyond even those written in the midst of Mormonism’s turn-of-the-century move towards accommodation and assimilation. Even today, more than a century after Mormons accepted the challenge of assimilation, Mormon novels are still hybrid, polyglot texts born from the utopian fervor of Mormonism’s nineteenth-century infancy and the complex post-utopian desire to be both an insider and outsider critic and participant in the American scene. Indeed, in subsequent chapters, I will show how the Mormon novel has functioned and continues to function as a site where Mormon writers mediate their paradoxical desire for utopian peculiarity *and* mainstream assimilation—a site of exchange where Mormon writers engage and appropriate aspects of mainstream culture to bring about changes within and beyond Mormon cultural boundaries, making the Mormon novel a kind of proving ground or laboratory for Zion building as well as extracultural participation and belonging.

What follows is an effort to conceptualize a theory of the Mormon novel and apply that theory to select texts. In Chapter One I introduce and theorize Mormonism’s “post-utopian condition,” the ongoing cultural phase that describes Mormonism’s paradoxical desire to be at once a “peculiar people” and a recognized member of mainstream America, in order to arrive at an understanding of the Mormon novel as an intermediary site between utopia and assimilation, Zion and Babylon. Drawing upon the utopian theory of Ernst Bloch and Fredric Jameson, I suggest that Mormonism’s twentieth-century turn from utopian experimentation towards mainstream acceptability was less a wholesale abandonment of its utopian principles and more a recasting of them to fit dominant cultural norms. Following Jameson’s definition of “utopia” as

“a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness,” I argue that the paradoxical stance towards mainstream America that emerges from this recasting is a kind of subversive “post-utopian” effort to preserve its utopian ideals of hope, social betterment, and global transformation without overtly taking a radical stance against the status quo. Working with the theories of Mormon assimilation of sociologist Armand Mauss and cultural critic Terryl L. Givens, as well as novels like Susa Young Gates’ *John Stevens Courtship*, I suggest that the Mormon novel emerged at this time as a cultural site where the Mormon Zion—now a malleable, decentered concept open to a “post-utopian” free play of meaning—can be imagined and reimagined towards utopian ends, including the conceptualization and eventual establishment of an inclusive Zion comprised of “many hearts and many minds.”

For the remainder of the study, I apply this understanding in four analytical chapters that address ways Mormon novels have responded to the post-utopian challenge of assimilation. Chapter two focuses on how the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novels of Nephi Anderson embraced the motifs and conventions of popular American novels, including the monogamous marriage plot and didactic genres like the utopian and Social Gospel novels, to promote assimilation and the construction of a post-utopian Mormon identity based on monogamy and Progressive-Era values. Taking a cue from Homi Bhabha’s notion of colonial mimicry, I also suggest that novels like *Added Upon* (1898), *The Castle Builder* (1902), *Romance of a Missionary* (1919), and *Dorian* (1921) generically mimic mainstream American novels like Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, Charles Monroe Sheldon’s *In His Steps*, and Zane Grey’s *Riders of the Purple Sage* to make a case for Mormon character and culture while subverting these novels’ privileging of Protestant values and ethics.

Chapter three examines changes in the Mormon novel following the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and Mormonism's institutional (and deeply conservative) reaction to them. Outlining the history of this resistance, particularly the rise of an anti-assimilationist phenomenon within Mormonism called "retrenchment," which sought to reverse partially the ambivalence wrought by the post-utopian condition, I show how liberal Mormons used the novel to challenge retrenchment's conservative call for uniformity and conformity, including the way it forced Mormons to engage in cultural "passing" within the community. Focusing specifically on Levi S. Peterson's *The Backslider* (1986), Linda Sillitoe's *Sideways to the Sun* (1988), and John S. Bennion's *Falling Towards Heaven* (2000), I explore how these novels resist the conservative retreat from mainstream assimilation by directing their utopian impulse not at the outside world, as Nephi Anderson's novels had largely done, but at Mormon culture itself. More specifically, I seek to reconfigure the term "Faithful Realism," which contemporary critics used to classify these works, to suggest a late-twentieth-century effort on the part of liberal Mormon artists to use fiction to protest the institutional church's increasingly conservative policies, reassert a progressive approach to Mormon belief and practice, and imagine a Zion that could accommodate those whom Correlation marginalized.

Chapters four and five focus on the future of the Mormon novel as the concept of Zion evolves with the post-utopian condition. Chapter five addresses the seeming epidemic of Mormon faith crises in the twenty-first century, sparked by a kind of online resurfacing of repressed historical information, with a look at two recent postmodern Mormon historical novels about the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre—Marilyn McMeem Brown's *The Wine Dark Sea of Grass* (2001) and Judith Freeman's *Red Water* (2002)—that trouble the orthodox Mormon historical metanarrative that has evolved in response to the challenge of assimilation. More

specifically, I seek to contextualize these novels against ongoing debates in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century about the presentation and function of history in the Mormon community, particularly in light of retrenchment's preference for faith-promoting narratives that sideline aspects of Mormon history that seem to challenge the divinity of its claims for the sake of a stronger sense of community cohesion and identity. Furthermore, I draw upon theories of the postmodern historical novel (Linda Hutcheon, Amy J. Elias) to argue that the Mormon historical novel, especially because of its popularity within the Mormon community, has the post-utopian capacity to promote an approach to history that makes space for ambiguity and uncertainty in a way that allows Mormons—and the Mormon community itself—to come to terms with and respond ethically to troubling aspects of their past.

Finally, chapter five explores how Mormon novels address the challenges of extending a post-utopian understanding of Mormonism beyond the borders of the United States, and well as their failures in meeting these challenges. Indeed, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the American novel is taking what Shelley Fisher Fishkin has called a “transnational turn,” the Mormon novel remains largely a “sub-species of American literature,” and Mormon novels that seek to engage transnational issues and non-U.S. landscapes still tend to do so solely through the lens of white American Mormons, particularly missionaries. Using Margaret Blair Young's *Salvador* (1993), Toni Sorensen Brown's *Redemption Road* (2005), and Ryan McIlvain's *Elders* (2013), however, I identify ways the Mormon novel has tried to imagine Zion on a global scale and reflect on what these novels suggest about the limits of these writers'—and Mormonism's—global vision. Following this reflection, I also suggest possibilities for the future of the transnational Mormon novel.

Critics, of course, will note the general absence of two topics: the first on the so-called “Lost Generation” novels of Mormon writers in the 1930s and 1940s; the second on Mormon science fiction novels. These same critics may also take issue with my lack of attention in existing chapters to Mormon genre novels published by LDS Church-owned Deseret Book and its various subsidiaries. Admittedly, these works deserve as much critical attention as the works in this study, and likely even merit place within it. However, my focus and attention have not been arbitrary. While this study makes passing references to the “Lost Generation,” for example, it does not include a chapter devoted to them primarily because so much has already been written about them as to leave outside critics almost with the impression that nothing major has happened with the Mormon novel since the days of Virginia Sorensen, Vardis Fisher, and Maurine Whipple. Furthermore, because so much of what has been written has been written well, I find little at this time to add to their scholarship, although it is altogether possible that later iterations of this study could include a chapter on the Lost Generation in the context of the challenge of assimilation and the influence of American modernism. Also, the absence of a chapter on science fiction, which is certainly to offend Mormonism’s passionate science fiction fan-base, is primarily the result of the lack of explicitly and overtly Mormon material in these novels. True, the science fiction of Orson Scott Card has moments of explicit Mormonness, particularly in his novel *Lost Boys* (1989) and his story sequence *The Folk of the Fringe* (1989), yet much of his best and most influential work, like the Hugo-award winning *Ender’s Game* (1985), are almost entirely void of overtly Mormon characters and settings. Because this study focuses on novels written by Mormons about Mormons, most science fiction novels by Mormons do not make the cut, no matter how thematically “Mormon” they may be. Finally, the lack of attention to recent novels published by Deseret Books and its subsidiaries—Covenant

Communications, Bookcraft—is less the result of a deliberate choice than a matter of personal taste. In chapter five, however, I do look at Toni Sorensen Brown’s *Redemption Road* (2006), published by Covenant Communications.

Each of these chapters approaches the Mormon novel from the context of post-utopian Mormonism’s efforts to respond to the challenge of assimilation. It also seeks to situate the Mormon novel within broader trends in nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century American novels, making an argument for its place in the American literary tradition. Like other literary works by marginalized Americans, it raises questions about the consequences of cultural assimilation, the function of literature and utopianism in constructing minority identities and communities, and the challenge of defining boundaries for these communities with respect to broader worlds. On one level, I want it to show how Mormons have adopted the novel form and made it, in the words of Orson F. Whitney “subservient to the building up of Zion.” At the same time, however, I hope it illustrates ways the novel has made “the building up of Zion” less a matter of subservience to a vision of “one heart and one mind” than of commitment to finding space where many hearts and many minds can imagine better futures together.

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¹ According to Stacy Schiff's biography of Nabokov's wife, *Véra: (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)* (1999), Nabokov vacationed in Utah before and after the publication of *Lolita*. Also, three years after the publication of *Lolita*, Nabokov was apparently "avidly following a Staten Island murder case, in which an eight-year-old Mormon boy claimed he had butchered his parents with a kitchen knife" (232).

² Books that address the representation of Mormons in literature and popular culture include Terri L. Givens' *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (Oxford UP, 1997); Megan Sanborn Jones' *Performing American Identity in Anti-Mormon Melodrama* (Routledge, 2009); Mark T. Decker and Michael Austin's *Peculiar Portrayals: Mormons on the Page, Stage, and Screen* (Utah State UP, 2010); J. Michael Hunter's *Mormons and Popular Culture: The Global Influence of American Phenomenon* (Praeger, 2012); and *The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Fifty Years of Public Perception* (Oxford UP, 2013).

³ Many Americans in the nineteenth-century fretted over the morality of novel reading, a worry only exacerbated by the fact that most novel readers at the time were "the young and the female," the two most "vulnerable" groups in the nineteenth-century American mindset (Baym "Readers" 50, 53). As Nina Baym notes, the nineteenth century cultivated the notion that women epitomized the good and pure in society that men sought after and protected from the "contaminating influence" of the world. The novel, therefore, was often seen as dangerous to society because it had the potential to disrupt the established order by exposing women to that which would debase and sully them (187-188).

⁴ Millennialism is an aspect of utopianism, but not all intentional or utopian communities in the nineteenth century were millennialist. Lyman Tower Sargent defines a utopian community as "a group of five or more adults [...] who come from more than one nuclear family and who have chosen to live together to enhance their shared values or for some other mutually agreed upon purpose" (15). These communities, both spiritually- and secularly-oriented, were widespread in Joseph Smith's day and frequently captured national attention. Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, remarked to Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle that the United States was so "wild" with "projects of social reform" that there was "[n]ot a reading man" in America "but ha[d] a draft of a new Community in his waistcoat pocket" (169).

⁵ Shortly after Rigdon's conversion to Mormonism in October 1830, Thomas Campbell warned Rigdon in a letter that "the pretended duty of common property among Christians is anti-scriptural, being subversive of the law of Christ and inimical to the just rights of human society" (Howe 121).

⁶ While a pastor in Mentor, Ohio, Rigdon also encouraged eleven families of his congregation to establish the communal "Family" on Morley's farm near Kirtland. Later, he also supported similar efforts by five other families in nearby Mayfield (Givens 22-25, "Rough Stone" 148-149).

⁷ While it is unlikely that Smith ever met this uncle—apparently, Mack's last visit to his Lucy's family was at least four years before Smith was born—it is entirely possible that his mother spoke of her older brother's efforts to live and work communally.

⁸ In the Book of Mormon, an prophet named Alma similarly places his followers under a covenant to work together for mutual support and survival. Echoing Winthrop, Alma encourages his audience to build an ideal community through mutual cooperation and model devotion to God:

And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light: yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments? that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you. (Mosiah 18:8-10)

Like Winthrop, Alma also counsels his followers to have "their hearts knit together in unity and in love, one towards another" in order to become "the children of God" (Mosiah 18:20-21). Yet, whereas Winthrop's sermon affirms class distinction and uneven wealth distribution as divinely sanctioned, Alma calls on him who has "more abundantly" to "impart more abundantly," while "he that had but little, but little should be required" (Mosiah 18:27).

⁹ The Puritans derived this notion from earlier millennial-utopian thought. Revelation 20:3-6 speaks of a thousand year period during which Satan is shut up in a "bottomless pit" for a thousand years while resurrected martyrs "for the witness of Jesus" live and reign with Christ. Revelation also describes the "new Jerusalem," a beautifully adorned foursquare city, which descends from heaven and offers sanctuary to the righteous from all the pains and evils of mortality (see Revelation 21). Written at the close of the first century, when Christians were facing their "first large-scale, sustained, legal persecution," the vision predicted Christ's second coming and the imminent demise of his adversaries, which "must shortly come to pass" (Olson 72-74, see Revelation 1:1). That this parousia did not, in fact, "shortly come to pass" led early Christians to scramble for meaning, often in the form of refocusing and refashioning their millennial longings to take account of the delay (84). In his study of early Mormon millenarianism, for example, Grant Underwood references one theory that suggests that the institutionalization of Christianity, in the form of the Catholic Church, emerged from the inexplicable dilemma of Christ's delayed coming. In order to assure themselves that "the movement was right after all," Christians aggressively sought doctrinal validation by converting the world and fortifying their institution (14).

Such efforts, in turn, led to the rise of thinkers such as Augustine, who read Revelation metaphorically and argued that God's kingdom had arrived in the form of "the prosperous career of the church" (16). During the Reformation, however, this tendency abated as some Protestant thinkers in Germany and England looked to the last days as a time when an outpouring of the Spirit would herald in a literal fulfillment of Revelation's prophecies concerning the New Jerusalem (17-18). As literal readings of apocalyptic prophecy increased in popularity, so too did the desire among some European believers to separate themselves from the "wicked" and prepare for the looming millennium in isolated communities. Among these groups were the Labadists of Germany and the Netherlands, which moved their community to Maryland in the late seventeenth century and established the community of Bohemia Manor "to purify themselves for the millennium (Durnbaugh 17, Berry 3). Another group, German Pietist followers of Jacob Zimmerman, a mathematician who predicted the millennium would come in 1694, banded together under the leadership of Johann Kelpius and immigrated to Pennsylvania, where they established a utopian community known as "The Woman in the Wilderness" and "watch[ed] the skies" for the fulfillment of Zimmerman's prophecy (Berry 4). Like Winthrop, and later Joseph Smith, these groups saw in America the promise of a new beginning, a place where Old World corruption could be abandoned and the new land prepared and perfected for Christ (Berry 2, Rokicky 2).

¹⁰ Although best-known for its high emotionality and frenzied camp meetings, the movement also spurred the rise of reform movements in the United States, which had no small effect on antebellum American culture (Hankins 5). Energized by revivalism and the belief that the Millennium was right around the corner, early nineteenth-century Christians like Smith worked tirelessly to prepare America for it, stitching their beliefs and values into American culture by founding new religious movements, communal utopias, and constructing a Benevolent Empire of relief societies, Sunday schools, theological colleges, and Christian publishing ministries ("Heaven" 49, Underwood 22).

¹¹ Although evidence suggests that Joseph Smith aspired to build this earthly Zion before Rigdon's New York arrival, it should not be overlooked that Sidney Rigdon's arrival in New York put Joseph Smith in contact with someone who had experience with the kind of communalism Smith found in the Bible and in his revelations. Eber D. Howe, editor of *The Painesville Telegraph*, a newspaper serving the Kirtland area, noted in the 16 November 1830 issue that Mormon missionaries claimed that they were headed "for the regions beyond the Mississippi," where they hoped to pave the way for a "City of Refuge" their prophet hoped to build for the righteous (qtd. in Van Wagoner 63-64). Since this report predates the Enoch "translation" by a month, the missionaries are likely referring to a millennial prophecy in *The Book of Mormon*, which claims that the New Jerusalem will be built upon the

American continent (see Ether 13:2-3, 8). While Rigdon may not have been the initial source of Smith's interest in communalism and utopian city building, his enthusiasm for and experience with communalist practices no doubt assured the young prophet that his dream of a New Jerusalem on the American continent could become a reality through mutual cooperation and communal living.

¹² As several scholars have pointed out, this new law struck a satisfying middle ground between the communalism of the "Family" and "individualist orientation" of the members of Joseph Smith's New York congregations, many of whom looked warily at common property practices. "In developing the Law of Consecration and Stewardship," Dolores Hayden argues, "the Mormons attempted to eliminate inequalities between rich and poor while maintaining a certain amount of competition to spur economic growth" (107). Dean L. May likewise notes that "significant elements of individualism" were essential to the system's plan "to equalize standards of living." For instance, while ownership of all property was in the hands of the bishop and dispensed at his bishop's discretion, the "*management* of property" once redistributed was left to the stewards themselves. Accordingly, how a steward went about his individual business—the prices he would set on goods and services, for example—was his choice rather than the bishop's. Moreover, individual families abiding by the law also were not expected to live in shared dwellings or eat at a common table with the rest of the community, as was a common practice among other American communalists (140). Aside from consecrating their property and increase to the church, Mormons were to live as any other people laboring in a free market.

¹³ A written explanation that accompanied the plat mandated that the initial plot of the city would be "one mile square" of parallel ten acre residential squares laid out in a checker-board of alternating north-south and east-west squares. Each residential square was divided into half-acre lots open for domestic development and beautification, and each lot was to contain only one brick and stone house, which had "to be built twenty-five feet back from the street, leaving a small yard in front, to be planted in a grove, according to the taste of the builder." Gardens were to fill the remainder of the lot, while agricultural structures, like barns and stables, were relegated to the outer-most squares of the plat, convenient to the farms and pastures situated just outside the square mile. In the center of the city, three large center squares were reserved for public buildings, including a Bishop's storehouse. Significantly, Smith reserved two of these large center squares for what would be a cluster of twenty-four temples, which were to act as headquarters for the church's two priesthoods, and serve as the spiritual hub for the City of Zion ("History" 357-59).

¹⁴ I return to the Utah War later in the essay. In brief, it was a largely non-violent conflict between the Mormons in Utah and the United States government under President James Buchanan. In 1857, Buchanan sent a force of 5,000 soldiers to subdue the Mormons, who were rumored to be in rebellion, and replace Brigham Young as the governor of the Utah Territory. For more information on the Utah War, see Bigler and Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857-1858* (U of Oklahoma P, 2011) and Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (U of Utah P, 1992). Chapter Four also addresses novels about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the bloodiest episode in the Utah.

¹⁵ Joseph Smith recorded a revelation in 1838 that designated Spring Hill, Davies County, Missouri as the location of Adam-ondi-Ahman. In doing so, Smith further sacralized the American continent in the minds of his followers. Not only was America to be the literal home of the New Jerusalem, but it was also the place where Adam and Eve dwelt following their expulsion from Eden. After his death, Smith's close associates also taught that he had identified Jackson County, Missouri, the site of City of Zion, as the original location of the Garden of Eden. Wilford Woodruff, for example, who would later lead the Church and end the practice of polygamy in 1890, reported that Joseph Smith told Brigham Young "that the garden of Eden was in Jackson Co Missouri, & when Adam was driven out of the garden of Eden He went about 40 miles to the Place which we Named Adam Ondi Ahman, & there built an Altar of Stone & offered Sacrifice" (305). That Smith did so, however, was not altogether inconsistent with his times. Like the Puritans of Winthrop's day, who saw America's utopian potential as a "City on a Hill," many European transplants saw the New World as an unspoiled Eden, although not usually as literally as Joseph Smith and his followers did (Brown 113-114).

¹⁶ Snow was not alone in imagining an imperfect, furnace-like Zion. In slightly more subtle fashion, Scottish convert John Lyon uses his poem "The Apostate: A Fragment" to warn European Mormons against having high hopes and unrealistic expectations as they prepare to immigrate to Utah. Written around the same time as Snow's "A Word to the Saints Who Are Gathering," the poem describes a Scottish convert's early enthusiasm for Mormonism diminish as "the roots of bitterness" grow "to putrid cancer in his soul" (lines 1-2). Like the "Gathering Saints" in Snow's poem, the convert's vision of the American Zion is unrealistically utopian, which leaves him unprepared for the refining tribulations that come with the Gathering:

The Gathering was his constant theme; for he

Had dreamed of golden gates, and pearly walls,
 And palaces, and ghostly saints at ease
 Reclining 'neath the palm-tree's shade at noon.
 And so he left, to seek this fairy land
Uncounselled, in his *own* imaginings.
 But ah! he thought not of the fiery path
 Where persecution, poverty, and death,
 Await the just, ere they can sing the song
 Of ransom'd ones, by suffering perfect made. (lines 22-31)

When the convert arrives in Nauvoo, the utopian community Mormons founded in Illinois after their Missouri expulsion, the “stern realities of life” set in and “His hope,/Like morning mist, evaporated quite,/And with it, all his dreams of phantom bliss/Which nightly pictur'd out Elysian fields,/Woods, lawns, and bowers, and wizard, winding streams,/By crystal founts, and cool refreshing groves!” (lines 34-39). Gradually, “disaffection's deadly 'venomed sting” poisons the convert and he falls “from his gigantic height,/As we have seen a falling meteor fall/From out the starry vault” (lines 44, 60-62). Within two years, the convert is back in Scotland, a “strange, outlandish looking man at church/Among the Saints”—one who goes through the motions of a believer, yet still harbors the “gnawings of the bitter worm within” (lines 69-70, 76). He has become an “apostate,” and his perception of Zion is now the antithesis of the “fairy land” he once imagined:

The Prophet, Saints, and all their labours, were
 His theme of execration and contempt,
 Anon he railed of horrid, murd'rous deeds,
 Of av'rice, cruelty, and heartless fraud,
 Pollution, and a thousand evil ways
 Unheard of, save in his degen'rate heart. (lines 83-88)

Like “A Word to the Saints Who Are Gathering,” “The Apostate” does not seek to be a soothing lyrical balm for the weary convert. In the disaffected Scottish convert, readers find a warning against the dangers of solipsistic utopian dreaming. The convert's apostasy is a result not of some doctrinal dispute with Mormonism, but rather of his individualistic desire to pursue “[u]ncounselled” the Zion of his “own imaginings.” Ultimately, he proves unable to “reconcile his blasted hopes” with the imperfect Zion he finds in Nauvoo because his disillusionment leads him to “distrust” everything about his new community, including its “holy men,” whom he perceives as “mere swindling vagabonds” (lines 41, 48, 50). The “convert” becomes the “apostate” in part because he is unwilling to surrender his “selfish soul” to an understanding of Zion as a process of creative social betterment rather than a perfect, fully-realized Elysian community (see lines 90-95).

¹⁷ That Bakhtin found the double-voiced quality central to the novel form is apparent elsewhere in “Discourse and the Novel”:

If the novelist loses touch with this linguist ground of prose style, if he is unable to attain the heights of a relativized, Galilean [i.e. Polyglot] linguistic consciousness, if he is deaf to organic double-voicedness and to the internal dialogization of living and evolving discourse, then he will never comprehend, or even realize, the actual possibilities and tasks of the novel as a genre. He may, of course, create an artistic work that compositionally and thematically will be similar to a novel, will be ‘made’ exactly as a novel is made, but he will not thereby have created a novel. The style will always give him away. We will recognize the naively self-confident or obtusely stubborn unity of a smooth, pure single-voiced language (perhaps accompanied by a primitive, artificial, worked-up double-voicedness). We quickly sense that such an author finds it easy to purge his work of speech diversity: he simply does not listen to the fundamental heteroglossia inherent in actual language; he mistakes social overtones, which create the timbres of words, for irritating noises that it is his task to eliminate. (327)

¹⁸ Barbara Hale, in writing about the place of Bakhtin in African-American literary theory, notes that Bakhtin's notion of the “double-voiced” text has appealed to theorists of African American literature because it “seems to hold a special relation to African American identity” because of its ostensible consonance with W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of the “double consciousness.” As Hale points out, however, reading Du Bois “double consciousness” through Bakhtin's notion of the “double voice” reveals that double consciousness is less a “distinguishing feature of African American identity” than an attribute of “all subaltern identity” (464). In this respect, one could argue that the “double-voiced” quality of the novel was particularly appealing to Mormon writers in the face of the challenge of assimilation and the essentially subaltern position it demanded. With the old antagonisms of Zion and Babylon

theoretically neutralized through Mormonism's new, post-utopian efforts to assimilate, Mormons found themselves compelled to reconcile their hitherto divided allegiances to Mormondom and America—in essence, to see themselves as both one and the Other. As a hybrid, heteroglot form, the novel allowed Mormons to replicate this “double vision” or “double consciousness” in a creative, imaginative space that, in turn, aided them in coming to terms with their ambivalence to mainstream America.

Chapter One

“Not altogether a play ground”: A Theory of the Mormon Novel

“If I had charge of such a society as this to which I refer, I would not allow novel reading [....] You let your children read novels until they run away, until they get so that they do not care—they are reckless, and their mothers are reckless, and some of their fathers are reckless, and if you do not break their backs and tie them up they will go to hell.”—Brigham Young, 1872

“There is a fact, that no one need disguise [...] that the civilization which we are seeking to establish is widely different, and often opposed to the civilization of the nineteenth century by which we are the most closely surrounded and intimately connected.”—George Reynolds, 1881

“The Latter-day Saint understands that this world is not altogether a play ground, and that the main object of life is not to be amused. He who reaches the people, and the story writer does that, should not lose the opportunity of “preaching,” [...] A good story is artistic preaching. A novel which depicts high ideals and gives to us representations of men and women as they should and can be, exerts an influence for good that is not easily computed”—Nephi Anderson, 1898

I.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the pressing challenge of the Mormon people was no longer how to establish Zion against the influence of Babylon, but how to preserve Zion from within it. Twenty years earlier, as defendant in *Reynolds v. United States* (1879), George Reynolds, secretary to the LDS Church’s First Presidency, had suffered for and defended the Mormons’ right to establish what he later called a “widely different” civilization from the

“practically atheistical” and “democratic” civilization that surrounded them. His desire to see such a civilization come to pass, however, received its death knell when Wilford Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto ended officially-sanctioned Mormon polygamy. Over the next thirty years, the Mormon novel would become increasingly similar to the American Babylon as new practices and assimilationist policies chipped away at its “apocalyptic utopianism” and transformed it into something more recognizably mainstream (Bowman 152, 154). But years of persecution and semi-isolation had taught Mormons how to be a people with a deeply-rooted sense of cultural peculiarity. They could embrace monogamy, capitalism, and American nationalism—even champion them—but such compromises would not erode their commitment to Zion. True, Zion could not be built physically upon the American continent—not in the near future, at least—but it could exist in other forms. Like its builders, the Mormon Zion proved to be highly flexible.

This chapter explores the role of the Mormon novel in Mormonism’s transformation from a utopian experiment on the American frontier to a post-utopian movement across a global landscape. As a product of and catalyst for this transformation, the Mormon novel’s history and cultural function are entwined with both Mormonism’s early twentieth-century retreat from its utopian past as well as its ongoing, paradoxical desire for mainstream assimilation coupled with cultural distinctiveness. The fact that Mormon writers in the early twentieth century embraced the novel not simply as a form of popular entertainment, but as a way to appeal to and instruct their rising generation in post-utopian Mormon identity, situates the genre as a site of Mormonism’s struggle with the challenge of assimilation. Accordingly, it offers insight into the myriad negotiations involved in their movement—hardly fluid—from a utopian position of radical difference to a post-utopian position of participation-with-difference. Moreover, this chapter provides a view of a community seeking to preserve its identity boundaries while

merging with and contributing to a society where it is a religious minority. What follows, therefore, is a theory of the Mormon novel that has much to do with how Mormons gradually freed Zion, the utopian core of their theology, from the gravitational pull of Jackson County, Missouri, its divinely-appointed center-place. Yet, taken more broadly, it provides a hermeneutic model for understanding how modes of cultural expression, like the novel, serve to mediate difference against the challenge of assimilation. As the introduction to this study shows, after all, Mormons are neither the only post-utopians nor the only niche group in America. The post-utopian elasticity they grant their utopian ideals—their radical response to the challenge of assimilation—parallels that of any peripheral people who wish to preserve a sense of self from within the walls of their own kind of Babylon.

II.

What does it mean to call post-Manifesto Mormonism “post-utopian”? If you begin with the colloquial understanding of “utopia” as an ideal place or society, then “post-utopian” might simply describe conditions following the demise of such a society at any stage of its development. This understanding, however, rooted as it is in the imaginary civilization Thomas More describes in his famous 1516 work, fails to account fully for how the term has evolved over nearly five centuries of use. Indeed, Lyman Tower Sargent has observed that “[t]he central problem with most approaches to utopianism is the attempt to use a single dimension to explain a multi-dimensional phenomenon” (3).¹ As a pun on the similarities between the Greek “*eu*” (“good”) and “*ou*” (“not”), which, combined with “*topos*” (“place”), paradoxically suggests both a “good place” and “no place” at all, the term inherently contains a challenge to probe its ambiguity and test its limits of signification. Such a challenge, to be sure, often serves as fodder for utopia’s critics, who emphasize the *outopian* to dismiss the *eutopian* as a pipedream or castle

in the air; still, its resistance to unambiguous signification allows for a high degree of malleability, enabling many applications. As Fátima Viera observes, the word has shown an amazing “facility for acquiring new meanings, for serving new interests, and for crystallizing into new formats” (6). Definitions that limit the utopian—and, by extension, the post-utopian—to matters of space or form, or dismiss it on grounds of impracticality and fancy, fail to acknowledge—and take advantage of—its rich potential to adapt itself to and explain a variety of situations and phenomena. Even so, as utopian studies like this one show, opening the term up to additional meanings does not change Ruth Levitas’ claim that as “we try to define it, its boundaries blur and it dissolves before our eyes” (2). Central to my understanding of the utopian and post-utopian is the refusal of these concepts to settle down on anything fixed and enduring.

In general, definitions of utopia since the mid-twentieth century trace their DNA to attempts to distance the concept from the totalitarian abuses of perceived utopian projects like Nazism and Stalinism, often by privileging function over form and focusing not on community building, but on impulses or desires toward hope, social betterment, and difference. Sargent, for example, whose scholarship on the utopian has shaped the way we classify utopian phenomena, defines utopia as “social dreaming,” associating the term with normal human fantasizing and the way we “envision a radically different society than the one in which we live” (3).² Other scholars take a similar approach, describing utopia as “the expression of the desire for a better way of being” (Levitas 8), “the drive to make the ideal world real” (Rabkin 305), “a strategy for the questioning of reality and of the present,” “a programme for change and for a gradual betterment of the present,” and “a strategy of creativity” that “[clears] the way for the only path that man can possibly follow: the path of creation” (Viera 23). For these scholars, utopianism is an imaginative exercise that provides or leads to viable political solutions to societal problems.

They recognize that perfection is impossible—indeed, some, like Sargent, actively seek to disassociate utopia from perfection³—yet they identify practical value in what they learn through desiring and striving for something better than what currently exists. Levitas, for example, suggests that “whatever we think of particular utopias, we learn a lot about the experience of living under any set of conditions by reflecting upon the desires which those conditions generate and yet leave unfulfilled” (8). Indeed, as Cosimo Quarta reasons, these desires are evidence not of unrealistic “unbridled fantasy,” but of a “deep *moral conscience*, which pushes humanity to dedicate itself to changing the present state of things, insofar as they are unjust or unacceptable” (163). For him, they are “an essential character of the human spirit,” an act of projection “impregnated with the historical, the social, the political” that is itself “the project and undertaking of the construction of the ‘just society’” (160). This accords well with Arrigo Colombo’s notion that utopian desires are “the foundation of our hope for humanity,” providing us a “confident certainty [that] comforts us along the labored walk of life and history, giving us strength, driving us to and supporting us in our commitment: to a society based on justice which we will build and build in fellowship” (194, 195). The value of utopianism, therefore, comes not by achieving an ideal end, but in the process of imagining, projecting, and seeking that end. Accordingly, when invoking utopia, we should follow Eric Rabkin in recognizing that since utopianism is “a necessity in our ideological lives but an impossibility in our practical lives,” its “full measure of benefit” comes precisely when we “[expect] no more of [it] than its nature allows” (305-306).

To a greater or lesser extent, this approach to and understanding of utopia—this theoretical reformatting of its “nature”—is indebted to the work of Ernst Bloch, the German Marxist philosopher whose three volume treatise, *The Principle of Hope* (1938-47; English

translation, 1986), “cannot properly be ignored in any discussions of utopia” (Levitas 83). In this work, Bloch needles out a place for utopia in Marxist thought, which has historically rejected the concept as antithetical to the class struggle, by expanding it beyond the form- and content-based utopias that Marx and Engels criticized to encompass something more pervasive.⁴ For him, utopia begins as a mental process, the “Not-Yet-Conscious,” which hopes for something better than what it already has. In an immature state, this “Not-Yet-Conscious” is “stale,” conciliatory escapism that helps daydreamers to cope with their undesirable conditions. As it develops, however, this hope grows “fuller [...], less random, more familiar, more clearly understood and more mediated with the course of things,” anticipating lasting change and endeavoring to bring about the “Not-Yet-Become” in material society (3-4, 11). Bloch’s utopia, therefore, manifests itself as much in the unconscious or barely conscious desire for change as in the physical manifestations or expressions of that desire. With hope as its essence, it functions to move society “towards possibility that has still not become,” to unmoor it from the status quo and the mire of past and memory (7, 144). All desires and expressions of hope, therefore, from daydreaming, to religion, to political activism, to works of art like novels—anything that extends “existing material into the future possibilities of being different and better”—have a utopian function. As Bloch notes, utopia sets itself apart from “mere fantasizing precisely” because it “does not play around and get lost in an Empty-Possible, but psychologically anticipates a Real-Possible” (144). In a sense, the utopian function of a thing works to reveal and perpetuate hope, to “[tear] the concerns of human culture away from [...] an idle bed of mere contemplation” and “[open] up [...] the ideologically obstructed view of the content of hope” in order to make real change happen (158). In Levitas’ words, Bloch’s “rehabilitation of utopia depends upon the removal of the abstract elements which clutter up the concrete core. Concrete utopia must be

winnowed out, stripping wishful thinking of that which is purely fantastic, compensatory and escapist” (89).⁵

Similarly influential have been Fredric Jameson’s contributions to the field of utopian studies. A Marxist as well, Jameson reads this late twentieth-century return to utopianism as a response to late capitalism and its seeming impenetrability after the rise of globalization and a world (free) market that “seems to have no natural enemies.” For Jameson, the apparent “universal belief” that capitalism is essentially “irreversible,” that all “historical alternatives to [it] have been proven unviable and impossible,” is “crippling” society; utopianism, however, because it encourages alternative thinking at every level, poses a potential threat to this (and any) system that seems so impenetrable (*Archaeologies* xii). Indeed, in *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), his most extended work on utopianism, Jameson characterizes the utopian form as a:

representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of social totality, to the point where one cannot imagine any fundamental change in our social existence which has not first thrown off Utopian visions like so many sparks from a comet. (xii)

In this, Jameson is clearly drawing from Bloch’s notion of utopian change being the result of an initial desire for something better than what currently exists; however, in referencing utopian form and the social totality, he seems much less willing than Bloch to focus primarily on the utopian function. Jameson instead takes issue with this aspect of Bloch’s theory, arguing that understanding utopia largely as a function fails to account for the sense of totality or “closure” that is “the source of that otherness or radical, even alien difference” that utopianism aims for in its efforts to imagine alternatives to the present (5-6). This leads Jameson to propose that the utopian is “an imaginary enclave within real social space,” an “aberrant” totality that results from

“spacial and social differentiation,” or the way society constantly changes and compartmentalizes itself via the rise of new spatial and social boundaries that structure and modify how we live, think, and interact with environments and others. During this process of differentiation, Jameson suggests, these enclaves develop and operate as “a kind of eddy or self-contained backwater” that forms a “pocket of stasis” that arrests the normal momentum of differentiation and nurtures “Utopian fantasy” briefly before being carried away by “the all-encompassing forward momentum of differentiation.” For Jameson, understanding utopia in this manner allows him (and us) to see how these utopian enclaves at once reflect the social “agitation,” often “transitional” agitation, that gives rise to them and provide enough distance from “practical politics” to allow the utopia to appear “eternal and unchangeable” and apart from the “social ferment” of the age (15). This provides a sense that

[s]uch enclaves are something like foreign bodies within the social: in them, the differentiation process has momentarily been arrested, so that they remain as it were momentarily beyond the reach of the social and testify to its political powerlessness, at the same time that they offer a space in which new wish images of the social can be elaborated and experimented on. (16)

In a sense, Jameson’s utopian enclaves become temporary sites of experimentation—indeed, Jameson compares them to an inventor’s workshop or “garage space”—through which we can identify present impotencies and imagine ways to overcome them in and for the future (see 14).

How do these approaches to utopia inform a definition of the post-utopian? In one respect, they complicate any notion of the post-utopian as a simple descriptor for what comes after utopia’s demise since Bloch’s function-based “rehabilitation of utopia” as a constant, ubiquitous hope or desire for something better is not something that can necessarily come to an

end the way an intentional community might end. Nor does Jameson's spatial analogy of utopia as an enclave complement such a notion as it seems to suggest that utopias operate somewhat spirally, fostering social changes that eventually necessitate new enclaves to foster new changes, all without a definite end to the utopian impulse that propels them. If utopia is as much a function as it is a form, how then can something be post-utopian? M. Keith Booker attempts to resolve this dilemma in his book *The Post-Utopian Imagination: American Culture in the Long-1950s* (2002), which uses the term "post-utopian" to describe the loss of utopian energies following World War II. Indeed, drawing likewise on Jameson and Bloch, Booker identifies the ways American culture in the 1950s failed "to project viable utopian alternatives to the present social order" to posit the post-utopian as a kind of paralysis of the utopian function, an anti-utopianism that manifests itself as consumerism, xenophobia, paranoia, nightmares, and "a loss in the ability to think in terms of coherent historical narratives" (4-5, 6, 8). While I find this to be a useful way of thinking about mid-twentieth-century American culture, particularly in its understanding of utopian as an alternative to the status quo, its characterization of the post-utopian as something essentially negative is not how I wish to understand the Mormon novel's relationship to utopianism, although certainly, as Chapter Three will show, the post-utopianism Booker identifies in his book is hardly irrelevant to post-war developments within Mormonism and its literature. Still, for this study, the post-utopian describes less a failure of the utopian imagination than an effort to accommodate it to the challenge of assimilation. It is a survival strategy, a temporary retreat from utopia's stance of radical difference for a more moderate stance of public conformity that is itself an incubator for enduring utopian energies. In brief, it describes a kind of double-voiced, hybrid effort to be both utopian and not-utopian at the same time: a utopian enclave that wears the smile of assimilation.

“Post-utopian,” therefore, is perhaps a misleading term. As both Bloch and Jameson suggest, the utopian impulse is a powerful desire and central, as so many theorist point out, to the human experience. At the same time, as the history of Mormonism shows, while utopianism is difficult to eradicate, it is not so difficult to muffle and subdue. Indeed, if the utopian is a radical stance, as Jameson suggests, the post-utopian can be understood as something of a moderate or accomodationist stance. It is an effort to preserve utopian energies and foster utopian enclaves—spaces of alternative thinking—without an overt show of radical difference. In the case of Mormonism, it is a stance in the face of the challenge of assimilation, a stance that comes with abandoning outward shows of radicality, like polygamy and communalism, for mainstream trappings, while promoting, somewhat subversively, group cohesion and difference from the mainstream.⁶ At the same time, however, it is not wholly a chameleon’s approach. While it is a survival strategy that allows one to be different and alike at the same time, the alike-ness is more than a screen for the difference. In the post-utopian subject, desires for utopia and assimilation are layered together through complex exchanges and concessions. Discerning what about the subject derives from utopia and what derives from assimilation is never a simple task.

Historians and sociologists have identified something akin to this stance in post-polygamy Mormonism. As the introduction to this study shows, nineteenth-century Mormons were neither unique in their efforts to build alternative communities—their own utopian enclaves apart from the mainstream community from which they fled—nor were their ethnic and cultural backgrounds radically different from the Anglo-Protestants with whom they frequently came in conflict (Givens, “Viper” 6, 123). Mormons, nevertheless, cast themselves as unique, constructing their otherness through a discourse of radical difference supplemented by utopian experimentation with polygamy, communalism, and other departures from normative nineteenth-

century American society (see Shipps, *Sojourner* 318). For them, establishing Zion as a radical response to Babylon provided a way to expose the limits of American commitment to democratic pluralism and use these limits as indictments against mainstream culture, thus demonstrating the superiority of their Mormon alternative to the status quo. This remained Mormonism's stance from the time Joseph Smith first dreamed of a holy city beyond the Mississippi to the day his successors compromised with the federal government to cast their radical utopian designs far into the future, comply with federal anti-bigamy laws, and focus instead on the here and now.

Historian Thomas G. Alexander, in his study of this transitional period of Mormon history, argues that this late nineteenth-century compromise forced Mormons to “grop[e] for a new paradigm that would save essential characteristics of their religious tradition, provide sufficient political stability to preserve the interests of the church, and allow them to live in peace with other Americans” (18). Kathleen Flake, in her own study of the same era, characterizes this new paradigm as a kind of gentleman's agreement wherein Mormons took on the more familiar—and politically-benign—shape of a Protestant denomination in exchange for the privilege of participating politically and religiously on the national stage (8). This agreement changed the public face of Mormonism; however, it did not erase their sense of uniqueness. Indeed, as Jan Shipps notes, turn-of-the-century Mormons ultimately settled on a stance of mere “difference” rather than “otherness”—her word for radical difference—by relegating that which made them Other to the realms of the “rhetorical and symbolic” rather than the “actual” (315). In doing so, Mormons found a way to subdue their utopian critique of the mainstream, preserve important utopian values of community and social betterment, and still maintain a non-radical stance towards their host. This allowed them to harbor a vestige of their radical difference in private settings, like the sacred secrecy of their temples, where they could preserve a sense of

identity and prepare for a far-off day when the literal Zion could again be reestablished upon the earth (Flake 133, Taysom 54).⁷ This new paradigm, this accommodationist stance towards the broader world, is what I call post-utopian Mormonism.⁸ Unlike its radically utopian predecessor, it views participation and investment in the world beyond its borders not as a compromise, but as a self-preserving strategy for continuing its utopian critique of the world.

Sociologist Armand Mauss provides a useful way of thinking about this post-utopian condition in Mormonism. In his book *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (1994), Mauss suggests that developments within Mormonism can be understood by the competing motifs of the Angel, or impulse to separate, and the Beehive, or impulse to assimilate. Following Max Weber, Mauss notes that new religious sects like Mormonism are usually born in “a state of high tension with their host societies and cultures.” However, as subsequent generations “begin to find the religious zeal of their ancestors primitive and unsophisticated,” and their desire for greater “upward social mobility” increases, these sects abandon the high cultural tension for routinized, assimilationist practices that ingratiate them to their host culture (6-7). For Mauss, nineteenth-century Mormonism, with its high-tension anti-American stance, displays the “unrestrained development of the angel motif” while post-Manifesto Mormonism—what I am calling post-utopian Mormonism—exhibits a general low-tension turn indicative of the Beehive (21-22). To be sure, these motifs have always coexisted in Mormonism, serving as two cultural poles between which the Mormon people swing, pendulum-like, as they negotiate their place in the broader world (5).⁹ Indeed, according to Mauss, it is because of this movement between two poles that Mormons display an uncertainty about the origins of the cultural traits that now form “such a conspicuous part of the Mormon way of life” (24). Positioned between two masters, particularly since the 1890s, Mormons have long-

identified with both the Angel and the Beehive, making themselves composites of their compromise with Babylon. For me, this composite consciousness—part Angel, part Beehive—helps us distinguish post-utopian from utopian Mormonism. Nineteenth-century Mormons never fully embraced the Angel motif in practice; yet, as the words of George Reynolds that introduce this chapter indicate, they earnestly believed their challenge to the mainstream, their utopian enclave, would eventually overrun the Beehive and remake the world. Post-utopian Mormons, on the other hand, understand that these enclaves are imperfect and have a short shelf-life, so they have learned the value of balancing the exuberance of the Angel with the practicality and social savvy of the Beehive.

Yet another paradigm that helps us understand the post-utopian condition comes from Terryl L. Givens' *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (2007). Noting how “Mormon religious difference [...] was emphatically demonstrated by perennial conflict with neighbors and militia that frequently amounted to bloodshed” throughout the nineteenth-century, Givens argues that Mormons have acquired a “sense of hostile separation from the world” that, despite having dimmed over the twentieth century, remains part of their “cultural vocabulary” and “continues to reinforce difference” today (54-55). At the same time, however, Givens notes that Mormonism’s openness to “truths” from outside cultures, along with their desire to “[establish] affinities with the dominant culture” as a way to ensure their “survival and ability to serve as a force for good,” has resulted in a counterweight desire for “universalism,” rather than “particularism,” in their engagement with broader society (57). Consequently, for him, Mormons are partially defined by their paradoxical desire to be at once a peculiar people and a recognized member of a universal society—particularly in the way they offset a “sense of uniqueness and exile” with “theology, rituals, and research programs that aspire to universal

integration” (58). Since the twentieth century, their “relationship to the wider world” has become “less inhibited, more complex, and more subject to negotiation” than it had in their nineteenth-century utopian prime. However, the traditional division between Zion and Babylon remains intact in the Mormon mind, as Mormons resist “the wider society” even as they borrow liberally from it in their efforts toward integration, assimilation, social acceptance, and respect. As Givens suggest, “Mormons continue to work through the paradox of an existence that is both Eden and exile, that embraces difference even as it yearns for integration” (59). This paradox, like the pendulum between the angel and the beehive, strikes at the heart of the post-utopian condition. It suggests an ambivalence towards the other that results in culture that seeks at once to integrate into and differentiate itself from its host. Again, it describes a stance of compromise, moderation, and muted resistance. It is a stance that seeks to preserve an identity as a peculiar people without appearing too peculiar.

My theory of the Mormon novel identifies this post-utopian balancing act of blending in and being different as central to the Mormon novel’s operations as a site where cultural tensions with mainstreams can be mediated and alternative solutions to them explored toward utopian ends. To see this ongoing cultural work in action, however, it is necessary to understand the Mormon novel’s layered, hybrid nature in the face of the challenge of assimilation—the way it weaves the shape and color of broader cultural trends with a utopian impulse for imagining alternatives to present conditions. Indeed, it is from this historical and cultural context of compromise, accommodation, and subversion that we ought to understand how the Mormon novel functions as an enclave for the Mormon utopian imagination, an often unassuming “garage space” where Mormon writers address assimilation and its ever-evolving challenge to abandon difference and conform to mainstream directions. What follows, therefore, is a brief overview of

the historical and theoretical development of the Mormon novel as well as its layered post-utopian voice. Doing so will show how the Mormon novel has emerged as a normative venue through which Mormons can speak at once to Babylon and Zion, serving both Beehive and Angel.

III.

If poetry was nineteenth-century Mormonism's literary form of choice for utopian expression, then the novel was its antithesis. Describing his utopian vision for the United Order of Enoch, for instance, Brigham Young was unequivocal about the novel's capacity for undermining Zion's order and tranquility:

If I had charge of such a society as this to which I refer, I would not allow novel reading; [...] it is ten thousand times worse than it is for men to come here and teach our children the a b c[s], good morals, and how to behave themselves, ten thousand times worse! You let your children read novels until they run away, until they get so that they do not care—they are reckless, and their mothers are reckless, and some of their fathers are reckless, and if you do not break their backs and tie them up they will go to hell [...] You have got to check them some way or other, or they will go to destruction. They are perfectly crazy. Their actions say, "I want Babylon stuck on to me; I want to revel in Babylon; I want everything I can think of or desire." If I had the power to do so, I would not take such people to heaven. God will not take them there, that I am sure of. ("Order" 224-225)

While critic Richard Cracroft identifies in this statement something akin to Socrates' injunction against poets in another utopian text, Plato's *Republic*, Young's fear of novel-reading seemed to

extend beyond Socrates' concern that the untruths of allegorical storytelling, the poet's craft, would leave highly-impressionable youths morally vulnerable ("Cows to Milk" 106).¹⁰ For him, novels were reading material for Gentiles, not Saints, and, as such, represented yet another Babylonian incursion on Zion. They were a siren's call that lured Mormon youths away from the safety of Zion's borders, thinning a generation whose commitment to Zion was crucial for the continued strength of the utopian enclave Young's generation had sought to establish in the desert.¹¹

Importantly, this view of novel-reading changed as Mormons transitioned from a utopian to post-utopian society and softened their stance on the value of mainstream American culture. A watershed year was 1889, positioned significantly between Orson F. Whitney's 1888 "Home Literature" sermon, in which he challenged Mormon writers to create "a literature of power and purity" to spread the Mormon message (298), and Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto ending officially-sanctioned polygamy. In this year, B. H. Roberts, an influential church leader, theologian, and editor, published an essay entitled "Legitimate Fiction" in the February issue of *The Contributor*, a popular magazine for Mormon youth. Writing pseudonymously as "Horatio," Roberts praised the "medium of fiction" as "the most effectual means of attracting the attention of the general public and instructing them." In fiction he saw a potential to give life to the "dry facts of a theory respecting social reform" and motivate people to take action in moral and political causes. Furthermore, he saw fiction as "an effective and pleasing method of teaching doctrine, illustrating principle, exhibiting various phases of character, and making the facts of history at once well known, and giving them an application to human conduct" (133-136).¹² As if to prove his point, in the following issue of *The Contributor*, Roberts published the initial installment of what is likely the first Mormon novel, *Corianton* (1889), a serial based on a minor

episode in the Book of Mormon involving an illicit sexual encounter between the title character, the rebellious son of an ancient American prophet, and a prostitute named Isabel. Clearly indebted to the biblical pageantry of Lew Wallace's best-selling *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880), the novel is a sermon against zealotry, arrogance, and unchastity cloaked in melodrama plotted around the vague figure of a harlot "whose body to the chief men of the city ha[d] been as common as their wills ha[d] desired it" (324-325). *Corianton* is an amateurish and unremarkable beginning for the Mormon novel; yet, its affirmation of Zion's values through a form hitherto associated with Babylon makes it as post-utopian as the historical moment from which it emerged. Subsequent Mormon novels would share this feature, reminding us that, unlike Mormon poetry, drama, and short fiction, the Mormon novel began as—and continues to be—a mode of Mormon post-utopian expression.¹³

We see further evidence of the Mormon novel's post-utopian origins in the writings of another early theorist of Mormon fiction, Nephi Anderson, a young Norwegian-American Mormon whose short stories, poetry, essays and non-fictional sketches were staples of Mormon periodicals from the early 1890s to his death in 1923. Like Roberts, Anderson believed that Mormon youths were fully "justified" in reading fiction, despite the objections of their "spectacled fathers and mothers." Praising its ability to convey beauty and goodness without relying on facts, Anderson understood fiction's kinship with the parable form Jesus employed in the New Testament and encouraged Mormon writers to follow their Savior's example and "recognize[e] the value of fiction in presenting truths to the understanding" ("Plea" 186-188). Indeed, like Roberts before him, Anderson believed this didactic aspect of fiction to be of great import for Mormon writers. Rejecting the "Art for art's sake" of contemporary European aesthetes, as well as the notion that "any novel written for the purpose of presenting a principle,

expressing a truth, or holding up an ideal” was “inartistic,” Anderson argued that a “story full of purpose” was capable of achieving great beauty, truth, and purpose because of its connection with God, the source of all of these things. “Art deals with beauty,” Anderson reasoned in his 1898 essay “Purpose in Fiction,” “and the highest beauty centers in God. Art deals with love, and God is love. Art deals with truth, and God is the source of all truth. All of the Creator's laws are full of meaning, full of purpose.” From his perspective, this was apparent in the works of “the world’s greatest novelists,” from George Eliot and Charles Dickens to Harriet Beecher Stowe and Edward Bellamy, whose fiction displayed such purpose. Consequently, he insisted that since “[a] good story is artistic preaching,” Mormon writers “should not lose the opportunity of ‘preaching’” through the popular medium of fiction. “A novel which depicts high ideals and gives to us representations of men and women as they should and can be,” he believed, had the power to “[exert] an influence for good that is not easily computed” (269-271).¹⁴

The novels that emerged in the wake of these calls for legitimate and purposeful fiction bore the indelible mark of the post-utopian balancing act between Babylon and Zion. Bearing the popular trappings of the novel form layered with a reformist utopian impulse that characterizes Jameson’s utopian enclave, these novels offered Mormons a socially acceptable middle-class American medium with which they could, in a gently subversive way, preserve and promote the Mormon morals and teachings that gave them a sense of being a peculiar people, everlastingly separate from Babylon. Such layering is especially apparent in Mormon women’s fiction from the same era. As Rebecca de Schwainitz has shown, fiction published in *The Young Woman’s Journal* at this time used the sentimental conventions of women’s fiction to teach young Mormon women the doctrines of the church, including the continued uniqueness of the Mormon people, and instill in them a sense of what it meant to be a Mormon woman after polygamy’s

demise (35-36). For example, as Nina Baym suggests, in the best-known novel by a Mormon woman from this era, *John Stevens' Courtship* (serialized 1895-1896, published in book form 1909), Susa Young Gates “merges a seduction story with military history” to “celebrate” the Mormon pioneers and “keep young women in the Mormon fold” (106). Diantha, the novel’s heroine, learns the value of chastity and courting only righteous Mormon men when Ellen, her best Mormon friend, is shot and killed by the deranged lover of a non-Mormon military officer with whom she has engaged in a premarital sexual relationship. Looking upon the dead body of her friend, Diantha feels “how inadequate were the theories of the world regarding love and its proper place in our lives.” This realization elevates Diantha to a new commitment to her Mormon faith and the moral values that set it apart from the rest of the world. Ellen’s death, in a sense, is a sermon on the dangers of choosing the world’s definition of love and sexual relations over Zion’s. Noting the lilies resting on Ellen’s breast, she in fact proclaims, “Oh, that I could tear away the lilies, and show to every girl in Zion the awful consequences of disobedience and vanity” (343-344). Love and sex can be a good thing, the novel suggests, but only within the moral boundaries established by Zion.

Importantly, compared to other novels of its day, there is nothing innovative or exceptional about *John Stevens' Courtship* aside from its Mormon content. As de Schwainitz notes, Mormon woman’s fiction taught women about the importance of domesticity and Mormon temple marriage, but also, to a certain extent, “encouraged young LDS girls to understand their possibilities, gain confidence in themselves, and change their ideas about male-female relations” (45). In this respect, the novel’s cultural work is not dissimilar from contemporary works of woman’s fiction, which likewise lauded similar values and institutions from a traditional Protestant stance (see Baym “Woman’s Fiction” xx). Even so, it is worth noting that *John*

Stevens' Courtship has a deeply post-utopian agenda, not simply for the way it borrows generically from the domestic fiction of the nineteenth century, but for the way it radically rewrites Mormon history for the rising generation. Indeed, despite being a historical novel about the 1850s, an era when Mormon polygamy was at its height, it is surprisingly monogamous and includes only one veiled reference to polygamy (see 110).¹⁵ Published in book form in the middle of Mormonism's aggressive efforts to distance themselves from polygamy, the novel anachronistically replaces polygamy with the strict moral code of Mormon monogamy at the turn-of-the-century as the principal marker of Mormon difference in the nineteenth century, thus making the difference between the Mormon and Gentiles in the novel a matter of chastity rather than polygamy. In doing so, the novel affirms a new model of non-radical Mormon difference, thus perpetuating Mormonism's utopian impulse towards otherness in a way that is unthreatening—even unremarkable—to Mormonism's critics in middle-class Protestant America.

As subsequent chapters will show, Mormon novelists continue to layer Mormon otherness with established generic forms, trends, and conventions, showing little interest for writing at the cutting edge of literary innovation. (There is, to the best of my knowledge, no Mormon *avant-garde* that is truly *avant-garde*.) For example, some of the most-praised Mormon novels in recent years—Brady Udall's *The Lonely Polygamist* (2010), Steven L. Peck's *The Scholar of Moab* (2010) and *A Short Stay in Hell* (2011), and Theric Jepson's *Byuck* (2012)—are taking the Mormon novel in exciting new directions that have already been trod, on a level of style and form, by American novelists before. In saying this, however, I do not suggest that Mormon writers lack creativity or originality. Rather, I argue that this borrowing is crucial to the Mormon novel's post-utopian ontology, which itself is a reflection of Mormonism's retreat from

radical difference and desire for a voice in broader cultural dialogues. Indeed, it is consonant with directions other ethnic, minority, and niche groups have followed in their struggles with identity and assimilation. African-American writers in the antebellum period, for example, appropriated conventions from Christian conversion narratives to tell stories of bondage and freedom to humanized themselves and their experiences for white Christian readers (Andrews 46). More recently, writers like Ralph Ellison, Ishmael Reed, and Toni Morrison have used literary modernism and postmodernism to engage these epistemologies and ensure their critique of identity, history, and community does not go unexamined by non-white communities (see Hogue). Indeed, critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has argued that African-American texts are “double-voiced” both in the way they borrow from Western literary antecedents and draw upon the black vernacular tradition (xxiii). As he notes:

Black writers [...] learn to write by reading literature, especially the canonical texts of the Western tradition. Consequently, black texts resemble other, Western texts. These black texts employ many of the conventions of literacy [literary?] form that comprise the Western tradition. Black literature shares much with, far more than it differs from, the Western textual tradition [....] But black formal repetition always repeats with a difference, a black difference that manifests itself in specific language use. And that repository that contains the language that is the source—and the reflection—of black difference is the black English vernacular tradition. (xxii-xxiii)

The black vernacular tradition that Gates refers specifically to is “signifyin’,” the verbal game in which two players riff on each other’s words to gain comeuppance, which serves for him as a metaphor for how African-American texts, specifically novels, draw upon and play off of

antecedent texts for the purpose of engaging both Western and black cultural traditions and enriching African-American literary culture through “repetition with a signal difference” (xxiv-xxvii).¹⁶ As he notes, it is an approach that is not limited to African-American literature, as “all texts Signify upon other texts” (xxiv). Similar practices surface in works from other ethnic, minority, or niche cultures as evidenced in contemporary novels by such writers as Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Junot Díaz, Michael Chabon, and Jhumpa Lahiri. Even works like Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins’ *Left Behind* series of Evangelical thrillers draw upon political thriller genre popularized by Tom Clancy and his imitators in order to legitimize Evangelical Christianity culturally.¹⁷

In comparing the Mormon novel’s borrowings from its host culture to similar “double-voiced” borrowings by ethnic and minority texts, I am not suggesting that all minority or niche groups are post-utopian because they are double-voiced. The Mormon novel is a form of post-utopian expression because its borrowings from the host culture are layered with a subdued utopian impulse that forms an enclave within the narrative—what Gates might call its “signal difference”—where a utopian imagination takes shape and has free reign in its creation of alternatives to present conditions. As the example of *John Stevens’ Courtship* shows, this difference can carry an intensely didactic tone in Mormon novels around the turn of the nineteenth century, which is more a borrowing from the mainstream literary conventions of the time than anything intrinsic to Mormon utopian expression. The difference, in other words, is not in the tone, but in the content. In the case of Diantha in *John Stevens’ Courtship*, it is not enough for her to embody righteous womanhood; she must embody righteous *Mormon* womanhood or her story does nothing to perpetuate a sense of Mormon difference so crucial to the novel’s framework for establishing Zion in the face of the post-utopian challenge of assimilation.

Without this double-voiced layering of a Mormon utopian function with mainstream forms, influences, and conventions, any Mormon elements in the novel seem inconsequential. Such is the case, perhaps, with Brady Udall's *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint* (2001), a novel by a Mormon author with significant Mormon elements that are, ultimately, highly localized and circumstantial to the cultural and thematic projects of the novel. Unlike Udall's later novel *The Lonely Polygamist* (2010), that is, *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint* displays no significant investment in the future of Mormon identity and community. While the novel's protagonist lives with and learns from a dysfunctional Mormon family, neither their dysfunction nor his interaction with Mormonism creates a utopian enclave that has any peculiar relevance to the Mormon people. In a sense, characters and settings happen to be Mormon without being crucial to the direction the novel, protagonist, and reader take.

Interestingly, the early coupling of the utopian impulse with didacticism troubled some Mormon readers and critics later in the century, causing many of them to dismiss Home Literature and downplay or sidestep the functional aspect of more contemporary Mormon novels. Home Literature's apparent lack of formal sophistication and ambiguity was enough to call down a hail of vitriol from Karl Keller, one of the most vocal detractors of Home Literature, who argued in 1974 that the didacticism of these novels led to "obscurant sentimentality and folklorish inaccuracy" in their handling of Mormon theology. Targeting specifically Nephi Anderson's *Added Upon* (1898), the most popular and beloved novel from the era, he characterized it as "a tract-like novel" that reduced the complexity of the Mormon cosmology to "sentimentalized guesswork" that was "ultimately insulting to the mystery of the Resurrection." "Such didactic Mormon fiction," he argued,

is escape fiction. It has no faith in the real and so will be incapable of stirring the minds of real people. It does not begin where human perception begins, in the senses, and so its message cannot be believed. That is, it fails to be sufficiently *in* the world and *of* the world. It is concerned, to its own artistic disadvantage, with unfleshed ideas and emotions. It tries to make that which is good without giving enough consideration to the good of that which is made. (63)

In a sense, Keller's misgivings about didacticism in early Mormon fiction was that it seemed to foster reductionist views of Mormon theology, which, when coupled with the tropes of sentimental fiction, became something embarrassingly dissimilar to the complex modernist and postmodernist fiction privileged by late-century academics.¹⁸ Edward A. Geary argued something similar when he wrote that Home Literature novels failed to influence because they substituted dogma for experience, using "distinctive Mormon characteristics" in a way that was "only skin deep, masking an underlying vision which is as foreign to the gospel as it is to real life" (15).

More sympathetic, yet still dismissive, were critics Richard Cracroft and Eugene England. In his essay on B. H. Roberts' contributions to Home Literature, for example, Cracroft characterized the genre as "a spoonful of sugar laced with Mormonism," glibly mistaking these novels' Progressivist stances, borrowed from their contemporary context, for sweetness ("Didactic Heresy" 120). Eugene England, on the other hand, called the period of Mormon literature between 1880 and 1930 "barren" and "not Mormon enough," yet softened his critique by encouraging critics and readers to value the efforts and intentions of Home Literature authors ("Dawning" 9-10). This view was later reinforced by Terryl L. Givens, who offered a fair analysis of Home Literature in his *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (2007), but

suggested that its success “was impeded by obsessive didacticism” (297). In each case, the didacticism is something to be dismissed, rather than understood and contextualized, because of its apparent simplicity and explicit functionality. Of far more interest to these critics were later Mormon novels like Maurine Whipple’s *The Giant Joshua* (1941) and Virginia Sorensen’s *The Evening and the Morning* (1949), which had the “benefit” of being published in the wake of American modernism’s privileging of style, ambiguity, and complex subjectivities. Cracroft, for example, along with his collaborator Neal E. Lambert, applauded the “increasing success” of this later fiction, claiming that such works proved that Mormon fiction had “reached a very virile puberty” (*Believing* 331-332). Geary, likewise, wrote admirably of the “fine artistry” and “imaginative power” of these writers, whom he collectively called “Mormondom’s Lost Generation,” believing their works to be comparable to “better known works in the mainstream tradition of American literature” (23-24). While Mormon literary critics have never entirely embraced the notion of art for art’s sake in their call for Mormon literature, they have typically privileged aesthetics over function, encouraging Mormon writers away from overtly purposeful fiction, particularly the kind that simplifies and evangelizes.¹⁹

Even so, function remains an important part of the Mormon novel’s layered post-utopian voice, whether it takes the form of didacticism or not. In his essay “Toward a Mormon Criticism: Should We Ask ‘Is this Mormon Literature’” (1999), Gideon Burton comes closest to describing the functional mode of this voice when he suggests that Mormon literature—of any variety, apparently—should be seen as part of Joseph Smith’s larger project of restoring Zion to the earth. Understanding Mormonism as “a critique of the world it has entered,” Burton claims that literature “is what [Mormon writers] *do* on the way to a still distant, spiritual-cultural destiny called Zion” (36, 38). More particularly, he suggests

that the role of Mormon literature and criticism will not be to establish what [Mormon] culture currently conceives of as Zion (something too apocalyptically distant [...] and too simplistically like a cross between the United Order and the Emerald City); rather, Mormon criticism and literature will help to discover and define Zion—to *achieve* this aspiration, not just reflect it. (41)

For Burton, Mormon literature needs to remain constantly on the move, constantly adapting itself to explore more completely its capacity to conceive Zion, rather than “mimetically represent or advertise Mormon experience or religion” (41). In pursuing this aim, perhaps, Burton’s notion remains too teleologically fixed on a single utopic end when he argues that Mormon literature’s efforts “to discover and define Zion” will eventually bring about an apparently changeless “spiritual-cultural destiny called Zion.” Even so, his notion of Mormon literature as a means of understanding and establishing Zion accords well with my view of the Mormon novel as double-voiced site of post-utopian expression where popular form is layered with utopian function to articulate alternatives to present conditions both in and out of Mormonism. However, since Zion currently exists in the Mormon imagination as a contestable post-utopian space,²⁰ a malleable, polymorphous ideal that never achieves its imagined teleological end because it is always being stretched, rearticulated, challenged, and supplanted, the Mormon novel is deeply interested both in what Burton describes somewhat dismissively as “establish[ing] what [Mormon] culture currently conceives of as Zion” *and* in gauging the limits of these conceptions and revising them towards new—and unavoidably subjective—utopian visions.²¹ As subsequent chapters show, Mormon writers have used the novel to “discover and define” conservative and liberal Zions, American and transnational Zions, and even racially-segregated and queer Zions. While the Mormon novel itself may never succeed in achieving a teleological Zion of one heart and one

mind, it nevertheless functions as a meditative site where many hearts and many minds can explore the varieties of Mormon experiences and “tinker” with the meaning and boundaries of Zion.²²

IV.

Are Mormon novels, then, failures? Indeed, Jameson’s notion of the utopian enclave as a temporary, unchanging, experimental space of radical difference to act as a critique of existing conditions seems to suggest that these utopian visions are ultimately doomed. As he argues in his essay “Utopia as Method, or the Uses of the Future,” utopias are “totalities” that symbolize “a world transformed” that erect “limits, boundaries between the utopian and the non-utopian,” that, while they seek to establish radical difference between the spaces they separate, also serve as a critique of this difference (“Utopia” 25). Hence, he extends his definition of utopia to suggest that it is not simply a “representational meditation” on difference, but “an operation calculated to disclose the limits of our own imagination of the future, the lines beyond which we do not seem able to go in imagining change in our own society and the world” (23). Utopia, in a sense, shows us the limits of our ability to imagine difference, and makes us aware of what we can and cannot conceive as an alternative to the present. By imagining a better world, that is, we become more cognizant of the ethical shortcomings of our own imaginations. Mormonism’s amorphous approach to its own utopian vision, therefore, makes it possible to imagine many boundaries and many alternatives to those boundaries, which in turn helps Mormonism adapt itself in its post-utopian condition. Every new interpretation of Zion, the “pure in heart,” creates new enclaves and new critiques, which in turn reflect back on and critique Mormonism’s ability to define difference and imagine alternatives to the present.

In a sense, then, all Mormon novels are failures in their efforts to realize their utopian visions. No matter what new boundaries they propose, no matter how they seek to define and redefine the circumference of Zion, they will only reveal, as Jameson suggests about utopia, “more about [their] limits and weaknesses than they do about perfect societies” (“Comments” 74). Even so, this should not prevent Mormon novelists from writing nor impede critics from reading the boundaries in these texts. Jameson is quick to remind us, after all, that the fact that “Utopias have something to do with failure” should not justify the pessimism or paralysis we risk acquiring in the pursuit of “Utopian visions.” He suggest, in fact, that “we use the Utopian visions we are capable of projecting today in order to explore the structural limits of [utopian] imaginings in order to get a better sense of what it is about the future that we are unwilling or unable to imagine” (“Comments” 76). In a sense, these visions provide us with a utopian impulse that helps us discern utopia in “a variety of unexpected and disguised, concealed, distorted ways,” leading us to conduct a kind of “detective work” of “decipher[ing] and reading utopian clues and traces in the landscape of the real.” While utopian spaces are doomed to failure, they nevertheless help us to see how even “the most noxious phenomena can serve as the repository and hiding place for all kinds of unsuspected wish fulfillments and utopian gratifications” (“Utopia” 25-26).²³ Moreover, by making us aware of our “anxiety about utopia”—that aspect of utopia we are “unwilling or unable to imagine”—they better prepare us for and offer new insights on how to change when change becomes possible (“Comments” 76).

Reading the Mormon novel, therefore, is an exercise in reading and rethinking boundaries and limits. Yet, as a form of post-utopian expression, the genre offers a hybrid landscape of many hearts and many minds where no clear line of demarcation exists between Babylon and Zion. The reader’s task, then, is to uncover traces of its utopian impulse and follow them to

enclaves where imperfect alternatives strive to answer the challenge of assimilation. Importantly, while these answers always seek something “better,” what that “better” thing is depends on the heart and mind desiring it. The Mormon novel, after all, voices no single vision for a “wildly different” utopia; instead, it opens itself to all voices, however doubled, who wish to sing in its tabernacle choir. No doubt the disharmony of these voices would bother George Reynolds, whose impassioned defense of Zion’s singularity opened this chapter. Interestingly, near the end of his life, Reynolds, overworked and physically deteriorating, found himself mentally paralyzed, longing for “movement to give [him] new thoughts, new ideas, new feelings” to keep his mind from dwelling on “only the tho’ts of the past, or wonderings regarding the future” (Van Orden 209). One wonders if Reynold’s stasis, his anxiety, was symptomatic of an inability to reconcile a lifetime of service to Zion with the post-utopian compromise with Babylon. Born of compromise, however, the Mormon novel seems to have avoided such stasis by embracing a layered post-utopian voice that speaks to and for both sides of its tangled pedigree. Indeed, its answer to the challenge of assimilation is its doubled tongue, its Zion of many hearts and many minds, which offers hope for better boundaries and better tomorrows.

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¹ Ruth Levitas supports this claim in *The Concept of Utopia* (1990): "Many of the problems which beset utopian scholars arise from the absence of a clear definition of utopia which separates its specialist academic use from the meaning current in everyday language" (3).

² See "The Three Faces of Utopianism" (1975) and "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (1994).

³ In "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (1994), Sargent writes:

[O]ne common aspect of past definitions [of utopia] is being rejected here. *Perfect, perfection*, and their variants are freely used by scholars in defining utopias. They should not be. First, there are in fact very few eutopias that present societies that the author believes to be perfect. Perfection is the exception not the norm. Second, opponents of utopianism use the label *perfect* as a political weapon to justify their opposition. They argue that a perfect society can only be achieved by force; thus utopianism is said to lead to totalitarianism and the use of force and violence against people. Without the use of the word *perfect*, part of the logic of the anti-utopian argument disappears.

Therefore, scholars should use such words only when they apply. (8-9)

⁴ In *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), Marx and Engels criticize what they call "critical-utopian socialism" for the way it seeks to achieve universal social betterment (even for the "most favored" of society) through "peaceful means" without the class struggle so crucial to their dialectic (238). They specifically view nineteenth-century utopian projects like intentional communities as antithetical to the inevitable course of human history. The projects, in their view, "deadend the class struggle" by "reconcile[ing] the class antagonisms" and pandering for bourgeois money to build "pocket editions of the New Jerusalem" (238-239).

⁵ Summarizing Bloch's contribution to utopian theory in relation to Marxism, Levitas also writes:

With no other writer is the rejection of form as a defining characteristic of utopia as consistent as explicit as it is with Bloch. The reason for this rejection is simultaneously political and theoretical: Bloch's Marxism, unorthodox though it may be, means that his central preoccupation is change. The assumption that dreams of a better life may play a part in this leads Bloch to define utopia in analytic terms, as an element in this process, rather than in descriptive terms; hence the overt emphasis on function rather than form or content. Since the function of expressing, anticipating and effecting the future can be identified in a vast range of cultural forms, the subject matter of utopia is identified in terms of the common characteristic of the intention towards a better life. (100)

⁶ As subsequent chapters will show, the "mainstream" in this dichotomy is subject to change as Mormonism itself evolves. Mainstream American society—or, by extension, any global mainstream—always seems to operate in Mormon thought as the "World" to which "Zion" stands in opposition—and this is the mainstream that so much early Mormon fictions mimics and resists. Later Mormon novels, however, find a new, often conservative mainstream in Mormon culture itself, which becomes something to resist in order to preserve a purer or better sense of Zion. In other words, the notion of a "mainstream" in this study is as fluid as the utopian. It represents less a real cultural or political entity than any site that needs resisting or opposition.

⁷ Of this, Givens (2007) writes:

To this day, the Mormon temple concretizes Mormon exceptionalism by the practice, perhaps unique in modern Christendom, of physically isolating a kind of spiritual elect in their own domain, while holding the rest of the world at bay, through strictly enforced admission procedures involving worthiness tests. Mormons are certainly justified in emphasizing that temple practices are sacred rather than secret, but that does not diminish the effect on participants: the knowledge that they are privy to "higher" obligations and truths, which must not be publicly shared, cannot but heighten self-awareness of their difference from the Christian (and even other Mormon) masses. (55)

⁸ Put another way, modern Mormonism (1890-Present) is "post-utopian" not because it has abandoned its commitment to the betterment of society, or even the physical, geographically-situated Zion of its nineteenth-

century utopian millennialism, but because it has projected these goals far into the future and retreated from its discursive and performative stance as Anglo-Protestant America's foil. Post-utopian Mormonism, therefore, is a kind of public-relations Mormonism insofar as it is aware of a *need* for public relations. Indeed, it is a fact that the early years of Mormonism's post-utopian condition were characterized by public relations efforts that downplayed the former stance of differences and sought to "be understood, [if] not necessarily joined, by outsiders." In 1893, for example, the Church set up a pavilion at the Columbian Exposition that prominently featured the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (Nielsen 47). In 1902, they sought to explain themselves further by opening an information bureau on Salt Lake City's Temple Square. Additional were also taken to restructure the Church's institutional memory by purchasing historically significant places from Mormonism's pre-polygamy past, like Joseph Smith's birthplace and the site of his first vision, and constructing monuments to commemorate their continuing importance to Church members (see Flake 109-137). As Flake argues, these sites helped to turn Mormon attention away from "a [polygamous] past they could not carry with them into the future," and restore their faith in the Church's earlier, "less grandiose but still large claims regarding restoration of the primitive church, divine sponsorship, and living prophets," the new "nonnegotiable core of Mormonism" (115).

⁹ Mauss, in fact, argues that it is this movement between poles that makes Mormonism something of an "anomaly" to this paradigm for the way they often resisted assimilation through retrenchment efforts designed to increase cultural tensions and foster community cohesiveness (15-16).

¹⁰ Socrates argued that "a young person can't tell when something is allegorical and when it isn't," and thus required "guardians of [the] community" to "ensur[e] that the first stories [young people] hear are best adapted for their moral improvement" (51).

¹¹ Mormons were not alone in their mistrust of the novel. For example, Bruce W. Jorgensen notes that contemporaries of Brigham Young, like Ulysses S. Grant, as well as intellectual progenitors like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, and Noah Webster, were suspicious of novels (78-79). To this list, Cracroft adds Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the American Transcendentalists who saw fiction "as an obstacle to self-realization and to harmony with what they called the Over-Soul" ("Cows" 116). Leonard J. Arrington, therefore, speculates that the Mormons inherited "the Puritan prejudice against prose fiction" from their predominantly New England roots (8). Cracroft, however, adds that an "increasing number of aggravating anti-Mormon novels depicting the evil and heinousness" of the Mormons—including Young and other church leaders—may have turned them off from the genre, which seemed to facilitate "the spirit of lying" that characterized so much of nineteenth-century anti-Mormonism (119). Moreover, Rebecca de Schweinitz speculates that Mormons in the nineteenth century spoke out against novels not only because they "undermined the appeal of truth," but also because "the transcontinental railroad and escalating migrations to Oregon and California" were bringing Babylon, and the "shoddy dime novels and tabloids" that romanticized it, ever closer to the borders of Zion (28-29).

Junius F. Wells' editorial in the debut issue of the *Contributor* (1879) seems to confirm this claim when it proudly declared that the purpose of the new publication was to "supplant [...] the thrifty growth of worthless literature that has found root in all the towns and settlements of Utah" ("Salutation" 12). Like liquor, cigarettes, and playing cards, this "worthless literature" served as an identifiable marker for what separated the Elect of God from the Babylonian Other. In fact, the November 1888 issue of *The Contributor* reprinted an article from the British newspaper *The Spectator*, which compared the "the mischief of voracious novel-reading" with "dram-drinking," or alcoholism (18). Brigham Young, perhaps, put it best, though, when he warned his son that novels offered "views of life" that were "greatly strained or entirely false"—even though they seemed to offer "insight into the ways of the world, its life and society." "Every elder in the Church of Jesus Christ who performs his duty will have enough experience in the vicissitudes of real life to satisfy him by the time he grows old," Young explained ("Salt Lake" 314-315). The genre had nothing to teach the Latter-day Saints about the world that could not be learned by doing one's part in the cause of Zion.

¹² Roberts also noted that "[t]his class of fiction" was also already being written by Mormon authors in the form of "stories illustrating the evils overtaking young women, who marry those not of our faith" in periodicals like the *Juvenile Instructor* and *The Contributor* (136).

¹³ In the subsequent decade, *Corianton* was followed by an influx of fiction and serialized novels in Mormon periodicals like *The Contributor*, *The Woman's Exponent*, *The Young Woman's Journal*, *The Juvenile Instructor*, and *The Improvement Era*, which served as the core venue for Mormon home literature into the first decades of the twentieth century. In June of 1889, for example, Emmeline B. Wells, editor of the *The Woman's Exponent*, began the serialization of her novel *Hephzibah*, likely the first novel written by a Mormon woman. Other serialized novels and novellas followed, including Ellen Jakeman's *The Western Boom* (1890-1891), Louisa Greene Richards' *Lights and Shades* (1890-1891), and Julia A. Macdonald's *A Ship of Hagoth* (1896-1897) in *The Young Woman's Journal*;

Nephi Anderson's *Almina* (1891) and Susa Young Gates' *John Stevens' Courtship* (1895-1896) in *The Contributor*; and Susa Young Gates' *The Little Missionary* (1899) in *The Juvenile Instructor*. Additionally, the 1890s saw the publication of at least two novels in book form: Ben E. Rich's *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City, That "Mormon"* (1893), a kind of treatise on Mormonism with some fictionalized elements, and Nephi Anderson's *Added Upon* (1898), the best-known work of fiction to come out of this era of Home Literature.

Interestingly, the rise of a distinctly moralistic fiction among the Mormons led them to distinguish between "good" fiction and "bad" fiction (de Schweinitz 29). For example, in a 22 March 1893 address to the young women of the Church, published in the May 1893 issue of *The Young Woman's Journal*, Julia A. Macdonald, who would become a Mormon novelist herself, warned generally against the "evils of [the novel-reading] habit," yet admitted that "[t]here are many [novels] which [...] have done an immense amount of good in the world, and there are a great number of persons who could not be reached in any other way, because they do not read anything else." Her challenge to her young audience was the same as most pro-fiction Mormons of the time:

So if we occasionally read a novel, let it be a good one. Let it be a true exponent of character, of nature and of life. Let them be [new page] founded upon fact, or upon matters of history, or if purely fictitious, let them be such as will emphasize good morals, virtue, temperance, charity, love of humanity, and frown down everything that is unchaste, unnatural, or ungodly.

Like Roberts, Macdonald justified fiction's place in the Latter-day Saint home on the grounds that it could build character, promote Christian virtues, and entertain while instructing and molding a model citizenry. With other early Mormon advocates for fiction, she particularly endorsed the novels of Dickens, Scott, Eliot, and Thackeray—Victorians whose moral vision generally aligned well with Mormonism's. She also recommended Mormon-authored works. "Literary talent is increasing and improving in our midst," she argued. "Let us foster and encourage it by reading and becoming familiar with our writers and their productions" (370-371).

¹⁴ Further evidence that Mormons viewed the novel this way is apparent in a 1907 *Improvement Era* essay entitled "Wholesome Reading" by John Henry Evans, another influential Mormon author and educator, who argued in favor of using novels to instruct Mormon boys:

I know that among some of our people there is a prejudice against novel-reading, but I regard it as based on a misunderstanding of the purposes of the good novel. At all events, the question confronts us, and will always confront us; we cannot ignore it. Boys have a natural craving for stories. Narrative is almost the only thing in reading they can understand. The feeling for action in some form or other is at the high tide, their power to grasp ideas in the abstract has little more than begun to develop. How foolish then it must be to ignore this fact! The better way is to assume that we cannot change the boy's constitution, and to endeavor to make use of it or to modify it to suit our purposes. (824)

Like Roberts and Anderson, Evans makes a case for the novel's place in Zion by recognizing the value of popular narrative as a didactic tool that could be appropriated and, if necessary, modified, "to suit [Mormon] purposes." He suggests a potential for layered purpose in the novel form that allows writers to perform crucial utopian work while drawing liberally from outside the enclave.

¹⁵ Following tropes borrowed from other domestic novels of the day, *John Stevens' Courtship* relies on a love triangle for conflict and tension. Under polygamy, however, this would not have been a problem.

¹⁶ We examples in "double-voiced" works like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, and Mat Johnson's *Pym*, which draw from "literary antecedents" of white modernism, postmodernism, fantasy, and black vernacular traditions to trope on these antecedents and create texts that speak to and develop what Gates calls the "black tradition" (xxii-xxiii).

¹⁷ In suggesting that Mormon novels follow the same paths as other minority groups in borrowing from the dominant culture to find a voice that can speak at once to the minority community and the broader culture, I am not suggesting that at all minority groups are post-utopian. Mormons are post-utopian because they have abandoned their stance of radical difference by paradoxically wishing to be seen as mainstream even as they cultivate a discourse of difference about who they are.

¹⁸ Significantly, Keller also overlooks the many ways Home Literature was, in fact, "in the world and of the world" by way of its appropriation of and engagement with the literary conventions of its time. I will explore this aspect of Home literature in greater detail in the next chapter.

¹⁹ This notion will be explored more fully in Chapter Three. Late twentieth-century Mormon literary criticism is often inconsistent on the issue of function, particularly in the 1990s, when developments in ethnic, Marxist, feminist, and post-colonial studies gave critics new ways for thinking ethically about how texts function in societies. In general, Mormon literary critics eschewed overt didacticism, but encouraged texts that promoted liberal/moderate or

progressivist changes within Mormon culture and the broader world. For examples, see Taylor, “Peculiar People, Positive Thinkers, and the Prospect of Mormon Literature”; Peterson, “In Defense of Mormon Erotica”; England, “Danger on the Right! Danger on the Left! The Ethics of Recent Mormon Fiction”; Kramer, “Heart, Mind, and Soul: The Power of Mormon Letters”; Burton, ““Toward a Mormon Criticism: Should We Ask ‘Is this Mormon Literature’”; and Allen, “Propaganda, Art, and the Desire to Testify.”

²⁰ As shown in the previous chapter, early Mormons believed that these boundaries would take a concrete form in the City of Zion they hoped to build in Jackson County. After these physical boundaries failed to materialize, however, Mormons adapted their view of Zion to encompass something more abstract. Less than three months before his death, for instance, Joseph Smith dislocated the *concept* of Zion—if not the *city*—from western Missouri when he taught that “The whole of North and South America is Zion,” and “the Elders are to go through all America & build up Churches until all Zion is built up” (*Words* 363). Later, following Smith’s death, the Mormons in Utah gradually modified the meaning of Zion to signify something more like a figurative community, bound together by common temple-based experiences, rather than a geographically identifiable place (Taysom 52). This particularly was the case at the end of the nineteenth century, when Mormons abandoned their stance of radical difference for a post-utopian position that wore away at many of the community’s tangible boundaries, like polygamy, theocracy, and communal economics. By the twentieth century, Zion was well on its way to becoming fully decentralized concept in Mormon theology. While the City of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri has never departed from the Mormon escatology, it has played a noticeably smaller role in Mormon thought than it had enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Today, resources on the official website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follow Doctrine and Covenants 97:21 in defining Zion generally as “the pure in heart.” It also “used [...] to refer to the Lord’s people or to the Church and its stakes” and, finally, “to refer to specific geographical locations” (“Zion”). Defining the concept loosely in this manner foregrounds how the term has lost its stabilizing center as a central city, yet also opened itself up to a kind of free play of signification that individuals can manipulate as they seek to promote and explore—sometimes pragmatically, sometimes not—the malleable boundaries that constitute contemporary Mormonism. Indeed, the malleability of the concept is especially apparent in the number of schismatic groups that have emerged since Mormonism’s founding in 1830, each of which has its own unique understanding of Zion.

²¹ The subjectiveness of this work speaks, perhaps, to Mormon novelist Phyllis Barber’s suggestion that Mormon literature written for the purpose of “building the kingdom of God” does not have to show “unequivocal reverence for all things considered Mormon,” but rather witnesses both to the varieties of individual circumstances from which writers have experienced Mormonism and their own efforts to pursue literature according to their own sense of personal responsibility (192-193).

²² In using the word “tinker” here, I return again to Jameson’s notion of the utopian enclave as a “garage space” (14), but also Derrida’s notions, via Levi-Strauss, of *bricolage* and the *bricoleur*, or one who uses “the means at hand,” that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appear necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous – and so forth. (360)

For Derrida, *bricolage* characterizes the “necessity of borrowing one’s concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined,” rather than constructing such concepts “out of nothing” or from a single creative source, an impossibility that amounts to little more than a “theological idea,” that, once recognized as such, exposes the mythological center of any system (360, 363). To think of the Mormon novel as a *bricoleur* is to think about the way it borrows from antecedent texts, both in and outside of the Mormon tradition, to construct utopian enclaves that foreground themselves the decenteredness of the Zion concept. This also suggests that the radical difference that characterizes the utopian enclaves in these texts creates *différance*, or Derrida’s notion of the signifier that differs from the signified and endlessly defers signification. In a sense, the act of Zion-making in these texts is never complete; no one text ever succeeds in conceptualizing Zion without deferring its meaning.

²³ To illustrate his point that “what is currently negative can also be imagined as positive in the immense changing of the valence that is the utopian future,” Jameson uses Walmart. For him, Walmart has the potential to bring about positive change by using its extraordinary power to raise the standard of living, say, by paying its suppliers better rather than exploiting them and forcing them to exploit others. If it used its money to improve the lives and companies of others rather than fill its own coffers, it could be, as an institution with a strong structure already in place, hugely influential in bringing about a better world. It also offers us an opportunity to completely rethink such things as production and distribution—possibly even leading to new categories (32-33)

Chapter Two

In “hearty accord with the work of moral reforms”:

Nephi Anderson and the Early Mormon Novel

“Yes, the world reads fiction. If one has a message to deliver, he puts it in a novel, into a living, breathing thing. The Latter-day Saints have a great message to the world. What a field is here for the pen of the novelist.”—Nephi Anderson, 1898

I.

Utah Territory is a dystopia for Protestant readers of Cordelia Paddock’s novel-as-exposé *The Fate of Madame La Tour* (1881). Full of lurid scenes of bondage, murder, and religious despotism, the novel depicts misguided, but God-fearing characters—both women and men—as they grasp desperately (and heroically) for means of escaping Mormonism. But this journey from bondage to freedom is not easy. In one horrifying scene, Heber C. Kimball—Brigham Young’s chief lieutenant (and grandfather of Mormon poet Orson F. Whitney)—coerces meek Louise La Tour, one of the novel’s heroines, into a polygamous marriage, imprisoning her in a remote house where he is free to take “a savage pleasure in making her feel that he was her master, and that she was wholly in his hands, without the faintest hope of escape or redress” (65). Meanwhile, suffering a different form of bondage, is her brother Philip, who, despite being aware of Mormonism’s abuses and heresies, remains “silent” while the “leaders of the people” justify acts of violence and wickedness with arcane scripture (184-185). For Paddock’s readers, both characters illustrate how “Mormonism blights and poisons whatever it touches,” permitting “no one who receives it in its entirety [to] retain either purity or integrity” (184). Few remain as

noble as Jessie La Tour, Philip's wife, whose courage against Mormonism's "foul superstructure of tyranny and crime" forges a path from this dystopia (193). With Philip in tow, Jessie finds refuge from this dystopia in the Congregationalist Reverend Norman McLeod's Independence Hall, a Protestant safe house for disillusioned Mormons, particularly women "whose bruised hearts longed for some message of hope and consolation: something which would remind them that the God of whom they had heard in their childhood—a God of infinite tenderness and compassion—still lived" (221). Protestantism thus prevails over Mormonism, its barbaric foil, preserving the sanctity of traditional marriage, pure womanhood, and Christian civilization.

It goes without saying today, perhaps, that *The Fate of Madame La Tour* was not an accurate portrait of the Utah Territory, the many affidavits accompanying its narrative notwithstanding. For nineteenth-century Americans, however, the more than fifty anti-Mormon novels published before 1900 provided evidence enough of Mormon depravity to shape public opinion and turn mainstream America against the Utah church.¹ As Terryl L. Givens has argued, these novels were instrumental in combatting the "Mormon menace," providing nineteenth-century Americans means to square anti-Mormon prejudice with republican commitments to religious freedom and pluralism (4). Key to their success was associating Mormons, who were ethnically indistinct from their Protestant neighbors, with behaviors—polygamy, kidnapping, captivity—typically associated with non-white peoples in the Western imagination, thus "invent[ing] a more comprehensive difference than really existed" between the two groups, which validated prejudice and justified the anti-Mormon campaigns of the nineteenth century (4, 134-136). To be sure, the popularity of this genre diminished following the 1890 Woodruff Manifesto; however, novels like Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) and *The Rainbow Trail* (1915), as well as films like H. B. Parkinson's *Trapped by the Mormons* (1922), ensured

that tropes from these anti-Mormon novels continued to shape the image of Mormonism well into the Progressive Era.

Unsurprisingly, Mormons who came of age in the late-nineteenth century were deeply affected by the “climate of antagonism and shame” fostered in part by these novels (Flake 28). Among them was Nephi Anderson, a Norwegian-American Mormon whose eloquent work as a missionary, educator, and editor often put him on the front lines of defense against attacks on his faith. When the Reverend O. R. Miller of the New York Civic League published an article in *The Reform Bulletin* critical of Mormonism’s moral character, for example, Anderson responded immediately with a letter attesting to Mormonism’s “hearty accord with the work of moral reforms.” When Miller countered with a condemnation of top Mormon leaders, particularly President Joseph F. Smith, “who [were] living in violation of the law of the land, and in violation of the laws of God” by continuing existing polygamous relationships (Miller), Anderson replied that Miller erred in the “mistaken notion that the sum and substance of Mormonism is polygamy,” a practice Anderson dismissed as “a thing of the past as far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned” (Anderson, “Letter” 1, 3). For him, what defined Mormonism was the character of its people (embodied in the family of LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith), its “power in it to uplift and to save,” and its ability to succeed where “corrupted Christianity has failed” (Anderson, “Letter” 2-4). In making this claim, Anderson reverses the argument made in novels like *The Fate of Madame La Tour* and other anti-Mormon texts by blaming the ineptitude of Protestantism, rather than the barbarism of Mormonism, for the decline of society. Had Protestants been more able to carry out “the work of moral reforms,” he suggests, there would have been no need for the Mormon people and the bright hope they offered humanity.²

The anti-Protestant tenor of this letter is typical of Anderson's writing. Indeed, in his work as a novelist, he made a literary career of writing novels that derided Protestantism and caricatured its anti-Mormon activity, often by subverting anti-Mormon tropes in popular fiction. For instance, it is telling that a portion of his first novel, *Added Upon* (1898), responds to the dystopian tenor of anti-Mormon fiction with a description of a decidedly Mormon utopia, itself a repetition of tropes gleaned from the utopian novels then in vogue. It is a tactic Anderson takes throughout his career, a kind of generic mimicry that absorbs existing novelistic tropes, conventions, and trends—from the traditional marriage plot to the Social Gospel novel—to carve out utopian enclaves where Mormonism offers alternatives to the ills of mainstream Protestant society. Importantly, however, Anderson draws upon these tropes, conventions, and trends also for the way they signpost socially-acceptable boundaries with which he can regulate and constrain his utopian imagination. Indeed, Anderson's efforts to address Mormonism's post-utopian condition through the layered voice of the Mormon novel, which presents it as at once consonant with and distinctive from mainstream mores, reveals much about the cultural work of this generic mimicry as well as the limits of his own utopian vision for his people.

Characterizing Anderson's work as "generic mimicry" speaks, of course, to the almost chameleon-like quality of the Mormon novel outlined in the last chapter, which layers the trappings of popular fiction with Mormon utopian impulses; at the same time, it also recalls the notion of postcolonial mimicry, the process through which colonized people acquire the culture of their colonizers and develop a kind of ambivalent hybrid identity. In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984), Homi K. Bhabha connects this process to the colonial power's desire for "a reformed, recognizable Other" who can adopt—and therefore affirm—the colonizer's ways, yet retain enough of "a difference that is almost the

same, but not quite” to establish a boundary between the two (126). At the turn of the century, the United had found a number of such Others, including the Mormons. By dismantling the Mormon utopia, and insisting that the Latter-day Saints abandon polygamy and other forms of radical difference, the United States compelled the Mormons to be “almost the same” as its Protestant majority, “but not quite.” The Mormons themselves readily embraced this ambivalence, welcoming the social acceptance it promised, while also accepting the “not quite” limit as a way to maintain enough tension with the mainstream to remain a distinct subculture. Even in their post-utopian condition, that is, Mormons were eager to retain vestiges of their nineteenth century identity—what Bhabha calls “slippage” and “excess”—yet adopted aspects of mainstream American culture—among them monogamy, capitalism, party politics, and the novel—to create a hybrid identity that was what Matthew Bowman characterizes as “more American, but also no less Mormon” (154). Such a transformation was mutually beneficial for both parties. On the one hand, mainstream America retained its hegemonic place and saw its conservative values affirmed in the Mormons’ new openness to traditional marriage and other Protestant virtues; Mormons, on the other, retained just enough difference to be “not quite” mirrors of their Protestant neighbors, thus establishing crucial community boundaries that otherwise could not have existed with the Mormon people’s lack of racial, ethnic, and class difference from the mainstream Protestant majority.

As Bhabha notes, however, mimicry hardly resolves the anxieties of the colonizer for its colonized peoples, but instead creates a situation that collapses difference between the two, thus making difference imperceptible or superficial enough to destabilize the assumptions upon which the colonizer justifies its hegemony over the Other. “The menace of mimicry,” argues Bhabha, “is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its

authority” (129). In the case of Mormons in the early twentieth century, the threat of disruption and destabilization always ran high as Mormons were ethnically identical to members of the Protestant establishment.³ It is unsurprising, therefore, that such destabilizing work is apparent in the post-utopian doubleness of the early Mormon novel itself, particularly in the hands of Nephi Anderson. As works like *The Fate of Madame La Tour* show, before Anderson published *Added Upon* in book form in 1898, essentially every novel about Mormonism cast the faith in an insidious light. When Mormons adopted that form, however, Anderson and his contemporaries created something that looked and read almost like a mainstream American novel, but, because of its intensely pro-Mormon content, not quite. This gave the new genre subversive potential, for, while it hardly garnered national consideration or acclaim, its mimicry contested the textual authority of the anti-Mormon narrative with a Mormon counternarrative that showcased Mormonism’s compatibility with Progressive Era values as a kind of utopian alternative to the Protestant status quo.⁴ This generic ambivalence, like the ambivalence in post-utopian Mormons themselves, disrupted and destabilized what had hitherto set the terms for Mormon representation, allowing the layered voice of the Mormon novel, as it mimicked the tropes, conventions, and trends of popular fiction, to work out post-utopian Mormon identity, identify generically-determined boundaries for acceptable critique of the mainstream, and present Mormonism as a viable utopian alternative to Protestantism.

As this chapter will show, this is especially apparent in the way Anderson’s novels frame issues of marriage and social/moral reform—two highly contested sites in early-twentieth-century Mormonism—within the context of Progressive Era society. Indeed, as the Miller-Anderson correspondence reveals, the Protestant mainstream to which O. R. Miller belonged hardly viewed Mormonism as a bastion of Progressive values. For Anderson, however,

Mormonism was not only in “hearty accord” with the Progressive *Zeitgeist*, but also its one true champion. And to prove it, he wrote novels.

II.

At the turn of the century, Mormon marriage practices came under intense scrutiny after Reed Smoot, a monogamous Mormon apostle, was elected to the US Senate in January 1903. Shortly thereafter, a delegation of protestors—“protestants,” as they called themselves—contested his seating on the grounds that he was “one of a self-perpetuating body of fifteen men who, constituting the ruling authority of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” used their position to “inculcate and encourage a belief in polygamy and polygamous cohabitation,” and promote “beliefs, conducts, teachings, and practices” that were, among other things, “[c]ontrary to the public sentiment of the civilized world” (U.S. Senate 1, 17). Expressing “no malice or personal ill-will toward Apostle Smoot” himself, the “protestants” nevertheless felt compelled to “deny him the right [...] to the high station of Senator of the United States,” because there he could “wage war upon the home—the basic institution upon whose purity and perpetuity rests the very government itself” (25). For the next four years, these charges became the basis for more than 3,000 pages of testimony from 100 witnesses (Flake 5). By the time the proceedings came to an end, Smoot’s opponents had raked the Mormon Church across the proverbial coals, revisiting allegations old and new of Mormonism’s many moral depravities—including its lingering reluctance to abandon polygamy entirely. While Smoot was ultimately permitted to retain his Senate seat, his church was forced to abandon its distinctive—and much-maligned—alternative marriage practice once and for all.

Still, even with polygamy forbidden from orthodox Mormon practice, it and a host of other barbarisms continued to characterize the Church and its people in the popular imagination

of mainstream America. For instance, in *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), the most enduring novel about Mormons from this era, Zane Grey uses anti-Mormon tropes like those in *The Fate of Madame La Tour* to perpetuate Mormon stereotypes, including the image of Mormon marriage as violent, predatory, and institutionally disruptive. Near the end of the novel, Lassiter, Grey's Mormon-hating antihero, recounts how, fourteen years earlier, his sister, Milly Erne, "fell under [the] influence" of a "famous Mormon proselyter" and disappeared amid rumors "that she was pinin' after the Mormon." Her disappearance throws her family into disarray. Her mother suffers an early death, her father becomes "a silent, broken man," and Frank, her preacher-husband, becomes "a ghost of his old self, through with workin', through with preachin', [and] almost through with livin'." The town itself believes "she run off" with the Mormon, although Lassiter states that he "never believed she went off of her own free will." This proves to be the case, when he discovers, through two letters he finds in Frank's room, that Milly had been "bound an' gagged an' dragged away from her home" by the Mormons, who ultimately took her to Salt Lake City, where, the letters report, she "had come to love" her captor (274-278). Like that of Louise La Tour, Milly Erne's story casts Mormonism as a threatening disruption of the Protestant bedrocks of home, marriage, and family, thus evoking the same anxieties that fueled the Smoot protests. From a standpoint of narrative and genre, moreover, her treatment at the hands of the Mormons at once evokes the captivity narrative and perverts the conventional marriage plot upon which so much nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction relied. She is the brutally-courtied bride, the captive of white savages, who embodies the terrifying ambivalence of the anti-Mormon novel's generic interventions.

The appropriation of the captivity narrative, to be sure, was common in both anti-Mormon and anti-Catholic fiction of the day, often because of its promise of salacious images of

bondage in closed, mysterious communities (Givens 115-116). As Gary L. Ebersole observes about Indian captivity narratives, these stories attracted readers with “a mixture of fascination and dread” as they thrust them into “an ultimate boundary situation where human existence, identity, and ultimate meaning are called into question as the captive’s world is turned topsy-turvy and his freedom and autonomy are stripped from him, along with his social status, clothes, and other cultural accoutrements and markers” (7). Like the marriage plot it perverts, however, the captivity narrative was also popular for the predictable way it balanced conflict and suspense with the certain promise of deliverance and closure. Indeed, the religious overtones in both *The Fate of Madame La Tour* and *Riders of the Purple Sage*, which allude to the genre’s seventeenth-century origins in narratives that paralleled physical delivery from Native American captors with ultimate spiritual delivery from Satan (Givens 115), suggest that the novels’ affirmation of the sanctity of traditional marriage through predictable (and thrilling!) scenes of Protestant deliverance from Mormon bondage account at least partly for the novels’ appeal to mainstream readers. For while Milly Erne dies before her deliverance, her brother Lassiter delivers her by proxy by rescuing not *only* her daughter Bess from the clutches of Mormonism, but also Jane Witherseen, a Mormon woman with whom he has fallen in love, and Fay, her adopted gentile daughter. Thus, when Lassiter, Jane, and Fay escape down Deception Pass, finding deliverance from their Mormon pursuers in the unassailable cliffs of Surprise Valley, they defy three times over Mormonism’s lawless affront to Protestant marriage and family.

For post-utopian Mormons, the association of their faith with a “boundary situation,” where everything is “topsy-turvy,” rather than ordered and stable, presented an obvious obstacle in the challenge of assimilation.⁵ The marriage plot, on the other hand, with its affirmation of monogamy as the path to membership within middle-class society, offered an attractive inroad

for Mormon engagement with mainstream culture. At the same, however, its appropriation also represented a major cultural concession as Mormons had once condemned the marriage plot as a tool of Satan for the way it championed monogamy and made it attractive to the young. Writing in 1881, for example, George Reynolds reasoned:

Modern Christian writers, when treating upon the subject of marriage, [...] claim that the union of one man with one woman only, is the true order of matrimony, and that a man cannot honorably and sincerely love two or more women at the same, time as wives should be loved. This falsehood is still more strongly though indirectly, enforced in the current works of fiction, whether in prose or song which treat as most of them do, on the affections of the human heart. Literature of this class extols a state of society utterly [sic] inconsistent with that which will exist when the government of God holds sway upon the earth. (358)⁶

For Reynolds, the women of the Church were especially imperiled because “the young lady whose mind [was] crowded with thoughts and fancies of the impossible and unnatural heroes and heroines of romance” risked adopting “matrimonial aspirations” that “turned in the direction of some modern counterpart of her beau ideal of chivalry” rather than toward the polygamous ideal of her society (358-359).⁷ A generation later, however, this anxiety was cast aside in the face of Mormonism’s determination to demonstrate its good-faith commitment to monogamy as the foundation of a stable society. Nephi Anderson, in fact, uses some variation of the marriage plot in all but one of his novels, *The Boys of Springtown* (1920), to provide paradigms for funneling polygamous desire into more Progressive (and traditional) “matrimonial aspirations.” Indeed, as Priscilla Yamin has shown, the Progressive Era used marriage “[t]o define the cultural and biological boundaries of civic inclusion.” identifying it as “a fundamental institution responsible

for the reproduction [...] of both values and blood” (87).⁸ For Mormons like Anderson, who had long suffered the stigma of being portrayed as a racialized, morally-dubious other, the marriage plot provided a perfect venue for making a case for Mormonism’s place within those “boundaries” in mainstream America. Its repetition of generic conventions with a Mormon difference, however, also allowed for continued disruptions to those conventions and the seemingly arbitrary boundaries they affirmed. So, while monogamous marriage (or courtship) between middle-class Mormons is a rather routine affair at the end of Anderson’s novels, their attention to the “not quite” of the Mormon marriage system is how they construct the enclave spaces of utopian critique that are crucial to their post-utopian engagement with the mainstream.

For instance, one way Anderson’s marriage plot is “not quite” is through its privileging of Mormon eternal marriage over Protestant notions of marriage that ends at death. In *A Daughter of the North* (1915), the two protagonists, Atelia Heldman and Halvor Steen, weather conflict after conflict until their marriage in the final chapter resolves tensions and brings closure to the narrative. Since many of these conflicts revolve around Atelia’s baptism into the Mormon Church, as well as Halvor’s reluctance to follow her course, despite his love, Anderson has ample opportunity to use their strained courtship to instruct readers on the “Mormon system of marriage,” the shortcomings of Protestant systems, and the importance of marrying within one’s faith. For instance, after her baptism, Atelia resists Halvor’s marriage proposals because she does not wish to be “unequally yoked” with an unbeliever (112). Halvor, meanwhile, seeking to understand Atelia’s reluctance, receives instruction about Mormon marriage first from Elder Larsen, a Norwegian-American Mormon missionary, then from the local Mormon mission president, both of whom contrast it with Protestant beliefs about a heaven where marriage does not exist (166). In his discussion with Halvor, for example, the mission president quotes

extensively from Joseph Smith's revelation on eternal marriage (see D&C 132), emphasizing the difference between Atelia's understanding of marriage and Halvor's inherited notions of an "unsexed heaven":

"Atelia is a Latter-day Saint. As such her ideals are different to the world's. Listen! Love to her has become by the added light which she has received not only a most beautiful, but a most glorious, powerful, eternal principle. The love of lovers consummated in the love of husband and wife is not narrowed to the few years of this earth-life; but it extends to the eternal worlds, going on and on, growing stronger, more beautiful, more glorious as the ages roll by. I doubt not, my friend, that in such a world of love Atelia lives even now, and I ask again, what have you done to bridge the gulf between that world and the one in which you live?" (162-163, 166, see 162-169)

Importantly, while the mission president emphasizes the "gulf" between Atelia's understanding of marriage and Halvor's, he characterizes it more as an extension of what already exists in the "world" than as something radically different. Indeed, while earlier in the novel Halvor admits to being "bewildered" by reports of Mormon "plural marriage"—a decidedly more radical system than what the mission president outlines—the novel, with its privileging of the "love of lovers consummated in the love of husband and wife," makes it clear that Mormonism now promotes the mainstream ideal of heterosexual monogamy. The difference, rather, is in matters of duration and authority. As Elder Larsen explains when Halvor asks if Lutheran ministers "should [...] marry people for 'time and eternity'":

"In the first place, they will not because they do not believe in it; and in the second place, they have not the power. This power exists only in the true Church,

the Church which preaches the doctrine and has the power of the priesthood to officiate in the name of the Lord.” (94)

Mormon marriage trumps Lutheran marriage, therefore, in being officiated by the “only” church that has the “power” to make marriages eternal, thus rendering Lutheranism—or any other system, Protestant or otherwise—incapable of delivering on the marriage plot’s promise of permanence, order, and closure. Indeed, in *Added Upon*, his most beloved and experimental novel, Anderson riffs on the failure of the Protestant marriage plot when a non-Mormon couple, newly dead after a boating accident on the eve of their wedding, find themselves dissatisfied as unwed partners in the post-mortal Spirit World, confused and despairing because they had been “taught back in that world from where [they] came, that there are no married condition here” (166-167). Without knowledge of (and access to) a system of marriage that extends beyond mortality, the Protestant couple’s narrative remains suspended and unfulfilled until they learn about eternal marriage and receive it through proxy.

Significantly, while Anderson’s use of the marriage plot always privileges monogamous pairings, he occasionally subverts the paradigm further by incorporating positive (though decidedly brief) depictions of polygamy into his narratives. For example, Anderson ends his second novel, *Marcus King, Mormon* (1900), with a monogamous marriage between his title character and Janet, his Mormon sweetheart. Janet does not have a monopoly on Marcus’ heart, however, since Marcus, a former Protestant minister, also marries Alice, his deceased former fiancée, through a proxy ordinance in the Mormon temple. Thus, while the monogamy standard is preserved in a sense:

There were in reality two marriage ceremonies performed and Marcus King got two wives in one day. True, one of them was in the spirit world, but there was no

inconsistency in that ordinance to one who believes that this life is but a span in the eternities of existence. (203-204)

Anderson does something similar in *John St. John* (1917) as well. A historical novel about Mormon persecution in Missouri and Illinois, *John St. John* follows a conventional marriage plot as the title character, also a convert from Protestantism, courts a non-Mormon woman, Dora, amid scenes of Mormon history. In the final scene, however, Anderson surprises his readers with a brief glimpse of a future in which John is married not only to Dora, but also to her younger sister, Jane, who beforehand had only carried out a mild flirtation with John (see 221-227). Even so, this instance of polygamy remains muted. Earlier in the novel, in fact, when John first learns about the “New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage,” he is not “impressed” as much by “the part which dealt with the plurality of wives” as by the “beautiful new light” of “the eternity of the marriage covenant” (128). Even so, in this novel, as in *Marcus King, Mormon*, Anderson speaks doubly through the marriage plot, keeping courtship within the boundaries of Progressive-Era marriage while subtly undermining it with brief, positive depictions of Mormon polygamy.⁹

Equally significant, however, is Anderson’s use of deviations from the marriage plot to respond to captivity narrative tropes in anti-Mormon novels, thus affirming the overall goodness of Mormon character. As the above examples have shown, Mormon courtship and marriage in Nephi Anderson’s novels is predominantly a monogamous institution that repeats traditional norms with significant Mormon differences. By depicting courtship and marriage in this way, Anderson is already responding directly to anti-Mormon imagery of Mormon marriage as bondage with narratives that vary slightly (but meaningfully) from the tradition marriage plot of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century domestic fiction, thus establishing Mormon

marriage as consonant with existing Progressive-Era norms. In *Piney Ridge Cottage* (1912), however, Anderson takes an even more direct approach to anti-Mormon captivity narratives by layering his usual marriage plot with a historical subplot about a failed polygamous relationship. Provided as context for a contemporary monogamous love story, the historical subplot involves a married Mormon couple, Hugh and Anna Elston, and the tension that arises after Anna first encourages, then resists her husband's love for Anna's friend, Agnes. Troping on anti-Mormon scenes of domestic unrest, Anderson traces the decline of Hugh and Anna's marriage not with the usual anti-Mormon attention to Hugh's lust or Anna's suffering, but rather on Hugh's heartbreak and Anna's rapid decline into hate and apostasy. When Anna announces her desire to leave Hugh and the Church, Hugh does little to dissuade or restrain her. Realizing that he cannot save their marriage, he "supplie[s] her with money" and reluctantly helps her on her way (70).

In having Hugh respond to Anna's disaffection in this way, Anderson offers an alternative view of Mormon men under polygamy. Unlike Heber C. Kimball in *The Fate of Madame La Tour*, Hugh takes no "savage pleasure" in mastery over Anna. Instead, he is a heartbroken victim of her double-mindedness, cruelty, and slander. Indeed, years later, Anna's son Chester travels to Utah to confront Hugh about the harsh treatment of his mother, but after befriending Hugh, Chester comes to "doubt [...] his mother's wisdom in past actions" (73). As he notes in a letter home to his mother:

Mr. Elston is an uncommon man—above the average. He may not be wealthy in this world's goods, but he has something else—mother, I wish I have more of it—character. This stands out boldly in the man. One can feel it in his presence. I tried to be important and to be angry, but I failed in each case. In his quiet, resourceful way me made me feel how little I was, on what a little errand I had come. (74)

Importantly, while Chester's admiration of Hugh is a rebuttal to the menacing images of Mormon kidnappers and rapists in anti-Mormon novel, it is not an overt endorsement of polygamy as a better alternative to monogamy. Only monogamous relations in *Piney Ridge Cottage* are successful, after all, and despite its obvious sympathies with polygamists like Hugh, the novel is clear on Mormonism's contemporary stance on polygamy. As we learn from Chester's observations of the community around Piney Ridge Cottage, Mormon polygamy is a thing of the past, existing only at the fringes of society:

He could not understand why his mother carried such hatred against these people and their religion. He had been led to believe that the 'Mormons' were closely akin to the heathen, that they were not Christian in any sense, and that the chief principle of their religion was polygamy. Why, he had not even heard polygamy mentioned, let alone seeing it in full swing in practice. Of course, he had not investigated thoroughly, but as far as he had inquired there were no polygamists in or around the Flat. It was reported that one man away on the other side of the hill had two wives, which rather than desert in a time of past trouble, he had taken with him to this wild region; but that was the only case known to the people of Croft. Simple these "Mormons" were, but not ignorant; unpolished, some of them, but not rude; out of style and not up-to-date, but not immoral. It was a strange mixture. (72-73)

In Chester's portrait of Mormons as a simple, but not unwholesome people, therefore, Anderson provides another counterpoint to the boorish heathens of anti-Mormon novels, revising the genre's dystopian vision with images of a welcoming rural society largely purged of its transgressive elements. Indeed, with the reports of the polygamist "on the other side of the hill,"

the novel seeks to remove the dusky hue of heathenism from the Mormon people by showing Mormonism as something physically as well as ideologically apart from polygamy—and therefore well within the “cultural and biological” boundaries of mainstream American society. In *Piney Ridge Cottage*, the future of Mormonism clearly rests in monogamous pairing like that of Julia Elston, Hugh’s daughter, and Glen Curtis, a shy local boy, who are poised at the end of the novel to guide the Church into the twentieth century.

Tellingly, the behavior of Mormon characters like Hugh Elston contrast with the less-savory behavior of non-Mormon men in other Anderson novels. In these works, Anderson’s marriage plots are interrupted by seduction subnarratives depicting forms of non-Mormon sexual coercion and bondage similar to those committed by Mormons in anti-Mormon fiction. For example, *The Story of Chester Lawrence* (1913), the sequel to *Piney Ridge Cottage*, reveals that Chester’s father, Thomas Strong, was in training to be a Protestant minister when he seduced, impregnated, and abandoned Chester’s mother (see *The Story*, 96). Similarly, in *Dorian*, Anderson’s last novel, a non-Mormon salesman names Jack Lamont arrives in Greenstreet, a small Mormon town, and begins “going out” with Carlia, a young Mormon woman. While Lamont is “a “fine-looking fellow with nice manners,” he exhibits a worldliness that troubles Dorian, the novel’s young protagonist, who worries that “this stranger, this outsider” is leading Carlia astray with a fast automobile and dates to the cinema (110-111). After Carlia disappears mysteriously, Dorian sets out to search for her, only to discover that she had become pregnant and delivered a stillborn after being “drugged” and raped by Lamont (178). In many ways, this discovery echoes Lassiter’s discovery of his sister’s fate in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, with Lamont as the mesmeric outsider whose charisma lulls the innocent and naïve local woman away from her loved ones and into bondage. Like Lassiter, Dorian’s search for Carlia is a search for

restitution and closure from the disruption of captivity. When he finds her, their ultimate courtship and marriage, along with the punishment and accidental death of Lamont, enact a kind of deliverance that restores justice and order to the narrative.

In each of these novels, the marriage plot allows Anderson to affirm Mormonism's commitment to monogamy and respond to anti-Mormon tropes of captivity and menace while also presenting the "Mormon System of Marriage" as a utopian alternative to Protestant systems. Through this generic mimicry, moreover, Anderson seeks to undermine the Protestant establishment's claim to moral superiority in the Progressive Era, making a case for the empty promises of the Protestant marriage covenant and the failure of its tenets to restrain the sexual appetites of men like Thomas Strong and Jack Lamont. Indeed, characters like Strong and Lamont, despite their education, fancy cars, and smooth-talking ways, operate not as models of progress, but as sites where progressive reforms are most needed. As representatives of the outside world, defined not simply by their worldliness and modern technology, but also by the way they echo captivity tropes, they embody the worst of what the mainstream has to offer. Marriages like those of Atelia and Halvor, Julia and Glen, and Dorian and Carlia, on the other hand, demonstrate how Mormonism provides an ambivalent consonant-but-alternative system that promotes and delivers a better, more progressive world.

III.

Anderson's novels execute similar post-utopian work in their attention to social and moral reform, other areas where Progressive-Era Mormons lacked credibility because of their associations with polygamy. Indeed, if the marriage plot helps Anderson make the case for Mormonism's commitment to monogamy, the utopian and social gospel novels provide generic models for casting Mormons as true progressive activists. Through the generic framework of

these novels, which reached their peak at the height of Anderson's career (1890-1920), he is able to prescribe Mormonism as a remedy for a host of social ill while remaining within the limits of acceptable critique of mainstream America.

Of the two genres, Anderson used the utopian novel the least, writing only two overtly utopian works in his lifetime, *Added Upon* (1898) and *Beyond Arsareth* (1920). Both owe a great deal to the late nineteenth-century surge of utopian fiction in America, however, which followed the publication of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards: 2000-1887* (1888), one of the great best-sellers of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Indeed, its comprehensive approach to imagining a seemingly faultless society initiated what Kenneth M. Roemer calls a "golden era" of nineteenth-century American utopian literature, a span of some thirty years when the utopian novel—along with its dark counterpart, the dystopian novel—became a kind of literary sensation (305-307). Although the exact number of utopian novels published at this time is unknown, Roemer places the number of such works written between 1887 and 1899 at 172, while Howard P. Segal, in a companion study, adds to the list an additional 129 works written between 1900 and 1920 (307, 334).¹¹

Reasons are many for the popularity of the utopian novel at the end of the nineteenth century. Lyman Tower Sargent argues that many of these utopian novels were written "simply to continue the debate" begun by *Looking Backward* "on the most equitable economic system" possible ("Themes" 279). Yet, the popularity of *Looking Backward* itself stemmed from its resonating response to the social, political, and economic climate of late nineteenth-century America. For while Northrop Frye acknowledges that the novel "had, in its day, a stimulating and emancipating influence on the social thinking of the time," one cannot ignore that it was also a part and product of existing nineteenth century utopian discourse, which Frye suggests had a

“close connection with the growth of socialist political thought” (327). Allyn B. Forbes, writing shortly after the end of the utopian novel boom, links the phenomenon to the accelerated industrialization brought about by the American Civil War, the passing of the frontier, increases in urbanization and the laboring class, and the new “relations between capital and labor” resulting from higher class-consciousness and unionization. Looking at the “profound disquiet and dissatisfaction” caused by these developments, he suggests that the late nineteenth century was “a period marked by numerous attempts to discover an escape from the condition that existed,” noting that the utopian novel had an “immense attraction as a means of fleeing from reality” (180-181).

Writing more recently, Phillip E. Wegner seems to agree when he suggests that the attraction of a novel like *Looking Backward* “lay in its comforting portrayal of a new and much-improved social order rising out of the upheavals experienced in the present” (64). The half-century following the American Civil War was scene to the turbulence of Reconstruction and the emergence of Jim Crow laws; westward expansion, the transcontinental railroad, and the American Indian Wars; industrialization, labor strife, and the rise of unions and corporate capitalism; the ravages of two economic depressions, the Panic of 1873 and the Panic of 1893; the Garfield and McKinley assassinations; anarchist terrorism; the Spanish-American War and its aggressive imperialistic aftermath; the Populist and suffrage movements; and the early years of the eugenics movement. As Wegner notes, these novels surfaced “at a moment when American society was in the midst of a deep and thoroughgoing reorganization” (64). Many of these novels were written not simply as a way to “encourage readers to experience utopia and to see the present and the future in new ways,” but also to participate in the reorganization by inspiring readers “to implement their utopias” and “transform the imaginary into an

accomplished fact” (Roemer 307).¹² Furthermore, for middle-class Americans in the Progressive Era, novels like *Looking Backward* encouraged them away from the individualism that had dominated nineteenth-century American thought toward cooperation and collective betterment efforts (McGerr 59).

Considering the structural and ideological instability of his own society, as well as Mormonism’s historic commitment to collective efforts, it is unsurprising that Anderson drew upon Bellamy’s “fairy tale of social felicity” to make his case for Mormonism’s compatibility with progressive reforms (Bellamy, “How I Came” 1). In Bellamy’s novel, Julian West, a disillusioned Boston blueblood, is mesmerized to sleep in a “subterranean room” of his Boston house only to wake up one-hundred and thirteen years later to find the world much improved (30). Indeed, when West leaves it in 1887, Boston is beset by class divisions, strikes, and the threat of anarchist violence; when he finds it again, its order and beauty make it all but unrecognizable:

At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings, for the most part not in continuous blocks but set in larger or smaller enclosures, stretched in every direction. Every quarter contained large open squares filled with trees, among which statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun. Public buildings of a colossal size and an architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. (52)

The remainder of the novel is an account of West’s reacquaintance with the “great city.” His guides for this process are Dr. Leete and Edith, Leete’s daughter and West’s future wife, who explain the various institutions that have been developed or reformed to bring about the city’s

ideal state. The novel pays special attention to alternatives to nineteenth-century capitalism, class and gender inequality, and labor exploitation and inefficiency. According to the system it outlines, these alternatives take the form of an almost entirely socialized society, with “nationalized” industry operating through an “industrial army” of men and women citizen-workers (87-88). As he witnesses the remarkable efficiency and justice of the future, West comes to see his nineteenth-century world for the dystopia it is. When, in a dream, he returns to it, he experiences it anew with horror, denouncing it before his old friends:

“I have been in Golgotha [...] I have seen Humanity hanging on a cross! Do none of you know what sights the sun and stars look down on in this city, that you can think and talk of anything else? Do you not know that close to your doors a great multitude of men and women, flesh of your flesh, live lives that are one agony from birth to death? Listen! their dwellings are so near that if you hush your laughter you will hear their grievous voices, the piteous crying of the little ones that suckle poverty, the hoarse curses of men sodden in misery turned half-way back to brutes, the chaffering of an army of women selling themselves for bread. With what have you stopped your ears that you do not hear these doleful sounds? For me, I can hear nothing else.” (461)

Through Julian West, Bellamy blames the misery of nineteenth-century society on indifferent individualism, self-interested pursuits, and the “folly of men” for refusing to organize and regulate their labor force for the mutual benefit of all (463-464). For him, the nation has the potential to end the suffering of its people by “regulat[ing] for the common good the course of the life-giving stream.” Let it do that, he reasons, and “the earth would bloom like one garden, and none of its children lack any good thing” (465).

For Anderson, Bellamy's vision of wide-reaching social change provided an almost limitless boundary for acceptable critique of mainstream America. Replacing Boston with the millennial City of Zion, "Part Fourth" of *Added Upon* (1898) describes a gleaming New Jerusalem where Jesus Christ reigns personally over the world's righteous inhabitants. In West's place are the King of Poland and his entourage, who tour Zion and witness its wonders under the guiding hand of Paulus, their Dr. Leete:

Before them, to the west, lay the city, the object of their journey—before them, it lay as a queen in the midst of her surroundings. At first sight, it seemed one immense palace, rather than a city of palaces, as the second view indicated. Street after street, mansion after mansion, the city stretched away as far as the eye could reach, mingling with trees and gardens.

Like Bellamy's Boston, as well as its counterpart in scripture, Anderson's Zion is a heaven on earth. Over the course of his visit, the king learns of Zion's advances in government, industry, education, environmentalism, and the arts. The city is also populated by righteous mortals, who "live to the age of a tree" and never experience a painful death, as well as a host of resurrected beings—including George Washington, Martin Luther, and Socrates—who appear as "the rest of mankind, save perhaps in the calm, sweet expression of [their] face, and the light which appeared to beam from [their] countenances" (179-180, 188). Leading them is a governing council under the direction of the great King, Jesus Christ, who visits his "sanctuary of freedom" periodically and is the source of "the righteous laws that govern nations and people" (179). These laws, the king learns, constitute what Paulus calls a "celestial law," "order of Enoch," or "United Order," the cooperative economic system revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831 for the elimination of economic inequality in Zion (see Introduction). As Paulus explains:

According to this law, no man can accumulate unto himself the wealth created by the work of others, as was the case in former times with us [...] All surplus which a worker accumulates beyond his needs is turned into the general storehouse of the Lord. Thus each man becomes equal in temporal things as well as in spiritual things. There is no rich or poor: each man obtains what he requires, and no more.

(192)

Herein is Anderson's consonant answer to Bellamy's "nationalism" and "industrial army," which, according to his system, eliminate inequality and the self-destructive individualism of the nineteenth century. Anderson, however, places added emphasis on the spiritual motive of workers; rather than working for money, they emulate Jesus in working for the "general good" and competing "to see who can improve his stewardship the most and bring the best results to the general storehouse" (197-198). The achievement in social equality, therefore, is not the result of savvy economic policies alone, but also the people's collective "faith in the Lord and His providences," their desire to repent of sins and be "born again of water and of the Spirit." Indeed, unlike those of previous industrial eras, who erred in the "supposition that unregenerated men [...] can come together and establish a celestial order of things," the people of Zion remain "in harmony with God's mind and will" and understand that "[h]igh law cannot be obeyed and lived by inferior beings who are not willing to submit to the first principles of salvation and power" (193-194). Accordingly, theirs is no materialist triumph, but rather the fruits of strict subservience and devotion to the divine. Reconfiguring West's indictment of the nineteenth century, Paulus gives all the glory of the reforms to God, who gave them the pattern for their civilization:

When I think of the times in the past—how so many of the human race had to struggle desperately merely to live; how men, women and children often had to beg for work by which to obtain the means of existence; how sometimes everything that was good and pure and priceless was sold for bread; while on the other hand many others of the race lolled in ease and luxury, being surfeited with the good things of the world—I say, when I think of this, I can not praise the Lord too much for what He now has given to us. (198)

As he does with the marriage plot, Anderson engages the utopian form for the ready-made boundaries it provides for acceptable social critique. Anderson's vision of the New Jerusalem is no more radical than Bellamy's nationalistic society in the way it strives to point a reformist eye at every aspect of the social totality. By repeating common utopian tropes—the naïve outsider, the guided tour—Anderson moves freely across the landscape of late-nineteenth-century American failure, proposing alternatives that seek an end to individualistic impulses that foster class inequality and suffering. Yet, despite its almost plagiaristic similarities to Bellamy's novel, a Mormon difference characterizes Anderson's utopia, and it is ultimately the United Order, not Bellamy's nationalism, that remedies air pollution, poor working conditions, unfair ownership and competition, class inequality, and even poor funding for arts and culture (see 189-203). In this way, Anderson's post-utopian voice enacts a double subversion, both through the utopian novel's inherent subversiveness, and the subversiveness of using the popular genre to promote a kind of Mormon utopianism that is essentially anti-assimilationist in the way it casts Zion as America's superior successor. "Brothers," says one inhabitant of Zion after reciting a litany of late-nineteenth-century social ills, "thank God that you live in the Millennium of the world. My heart grows sick when my mind reverts back to the scenes of long ago" (186-187).

That long-ago, like the long-ago of Julian West's dystopic nineteenth-century, was an America governed by a Protestant establishment, which, in the words of a minister in Bellamy's future, "was in name Christian" but built upon a "commercial and industrial frame of society [that] was the embodiment of the anti-Christian spirit" (395).¹³ For Anderson, the utopian form allows him to show Mormonism as the progressive solution to this "anti-Christian spirit."

Anderson returned briefly to the Utopian genre later in his life with the novella *Beyond Arsareth* (1920), which mixes high adventure (airplanes, arctic exploration) with utopianism in the vein of works like Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) or Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915). However, compared to *Added Upon*, *Beyond Arsareth* does not provide much in the way of a universal utopian vision, focusing instead on the bucolic lives of a largely pastoral civilization descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Indeed, the utopian impulse of Anderson's later novels derives its potency from conventions borrowed from social gospel novels, or works that reflect the predominately Protestant Christian reform movement that called upon Progressive-Era believers to join together to take an active role in ameliorating the poor conditions of society, as Jesus had in his day.¹⁴ In the view of these reformers (as well as their utopian contemporaries), the years following the Civil War, with their rapid industrialization and urbanization, has destabilized the nation, fostering a host of social ills—alcoholism, poverty, prostitution, vagrancy, gambling—that were too enticing and pervasive for one to resist alone. Furthermore, Calvinistic dogmas of hell and damnation, which had led Christians throughout the nineteenth-century to turn inwardly, focusing more on their own sorry states than the sorry states of those around them, seemed to them too narrow and individualistic to accomplish any meaningful good. If Christians were going to be Christian in more than simply

name, they would have to unite in social efforts of “service, sacrifice, and love” to identify the material sources of evil and eradicate them (Curtis 391-394, Nicholl 1, 8).

Between 1870 and 1920, the fiction that emerged from this movement, like utopian fiction itself, proved extremely popular. The most enduring social gospel novel, Charles M. Sheldon’s *In His Steps* (1897), even proved more successful than Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, selling upwards of eight million copies throughout the world. (Nicholl 2). This success, according to one scholar, was likely “due, at least in part, to their facile blending of love stories and happy endings with proposals for Christian reform” (24). However, the novels also invited readers to engage the narratives in exciting ways. As Gregory S. Jackson has noted, “homiletic” novels like *In His Steps* “denied readers a passive role, presenting instead real-life scenarios that demanded narrative participation, insisted on moral volition, and asked readers to apply discursive enactments to their own lives through imaginative exercises for structuring everyday reality” (643). These novels, in other words, were not written merely to entertain, but also to provide lifestyle models that challenged readers to leave the easy chair and take an active part in the crusade against social evils (Walker xvii). For instance, in Sheldon’s *In His Steps*, Henry Maxwell, a Protestant minister, recognizes the routine of his own Christian passivity and challenges himself and his congregation to “act just as [Jesus] would if He were in [their] places, regardless of immediate results” (18). Following this charge, a number of his middle-class congregants change behaviors in their lives, which they find inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus. For each, like a newspaper editor who chooses to “run the paper strictly on Christian principles,” eliminating news of prize-fights and other unsavory ordeals, the changes come at a high price (27). However, their active zeal in doing as Jesus would do reinvigorates the town spiritually, separating true Christian action from passive belief. The novel focuses especially on

the efforts of Christians to reform the Rectangle, the town slum, and deliver it from “the Satan of rum” (132). When they fail to do so through political channels, it is the fault of “a hundred Christians, professing disciples” who “had failed to go to the polls” against the “whisky men” (138).

Here, as elsewhere in the novel, the focus is on action, on *doing* as Jesus would do. Readers are meant to see themselves in Sheldon’s characters, avoiding the sin, condemned in Maxwell’s final sermon, of being “nominal” Christians who have “unconsciously, lazily, selfishly, formally grown into a discipleship that Jesus himself would not acknowledge” (277-278). Maxwell’s is an applied Christianity for the Progressive Era, more a way of life than a set of doctrinal creeds. While offering a decidedly middle-class vision of reform, which extends its outreach only as far as the fringe of white society, *In His Steps* challenges a passively Protestant America “to imagine a world outside [the] middle class world” in which it hides (Roberts 50). Through characters like the aristocratic Madam Page, who refuses, “for the sake of [their] reputations,” to assist her millionaire granddaughter in aiding and sheltering Loreen, a drunken prostitute, the novel exposes the hypocrisy of armchair Christianity and upsets the moral authority of the Protestant establishment (128).

Anderson’s novels, particularly those written after his 1904-1906 mission to England, display the influence of these works, exploring religion’s capacity to reform vice not simply through the faith and prayers of believers, but through direct action and application of Jesus’ teachings. However, whereas Sheldon’s characters only engage superficially with scriptural texts to extrapolate the will of Jesus, allowing their Christian conscience instead to determine action (see Boyer 62-63), Anderson’s characters rely heavily on the authority of Jesus’ words, via Joseph Smith’s revelations, to provide means for change. This is particularly the case with the

Word of Wisdom, the Mormon health code, which was then receiving new vitality in the progressive climate of the era. Indeed, when the Word of Wisdom was first revealed in 1833, cautioning Mormons that wine, strong drinks, tobacco, and “hot drinks” were “not for the body or belly” (D&C 89.1-13), it was not strictly followed, although certain Church authorities at times encouraged Church members to live it, leading some Mormons to see adherence to it as a matter of individual choice (Alexander 258-159). In Anderson’s day, however, progressive-minded Church leaders, particularly Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant, encouraged all Latter-day Saints “to refrain from the use of tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco,” thus bringing Mormons generally in line with Evangelical reform movements that sought similarly to break the nation’s alcohol and tobacco habit (260-261).

Anderson’s novels reflect this shift, and all of his novels written after *Marcus King*, *Mormon* (1900) make at least a passing reference to Word of Wisdom practices, either directly or as a warning against the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and coffee. Anderson’s first major treatment of on these themes is in *The Castle Builder* (1902) with the character Einer Gundersen, an abusive man who turns to alcoholism to cope with his failure to “supply his family with the bare necessities” at a time of “extreme scarcity and poverty” in Norway. He spends his money on rum whenever possible and whips his children, particularly Harald, the novel’s protagonist, whose burden it is to tend to the “home affairs” when his father fails to do so (21-22). Consistent with all stock “saintly sinner” characters in social gospel fiction, however, Gundersen’s innate goodness does not fall victim to alcohol. More an object of pity than of cruelty and disdain, Gundersen is a good soul at heart whose plight is worthy of our sympathy. Indeed, like Loreen, the drunken prostitute in *In His Steps*, his recovery from sin is proof positive of the power of God in changing lives, although, to be sure, Anderson’s emphasis is specifically on the power of

Mormon principles, as revealed by God, to overcome suffering and addiction. After Harald becomes a Mormon, in fact, he returns home and teaches his father about his new faith, which the old man immediately embraces with instantaneous effect:

But a new force had entered the life of Einer Gundersen, a force that gave him power over the adversary of his soul. From the hour of his baptism to his death, Einer Gundersen did not once taste of intoxicating liquor. When the elders, who often visited him, told him that it was not right to use tobacco, he at once threw away his pipe, and that was the end of it. In very deed he had been born again into another life. What little money he earned, he brought home to his wife, who, though she could not see as he did in the matter of religion, thanked God for the change in his life. (194-195)

Anderson returns again to the social gospel themes, particularly alcoholism, in his books *Romance of a Missionary* (serialized 1908-1909, published 1919) and *The Boys of Springtown* (1920). In both novels, the alcoholics are members of Liverpool's working class, and in *The Boys of Springtown*, emigration to America and the Mormon Zion is depicted as a way for the alcoholic's son to escape his father's fate (see *Boys* 8). *Romance of a Missionary*, however, treats alcoholism—and the Word of Wisdom principles—with more depth than any other Anderson novel. Written immediately after a mission to England, during which Anderson served directly with the prohibitionist apostle and future Church president Heber J. Grant, *Romance of a Missionary* draws largely upon Anderson's experiences in Liverpool and its working class between 1904 and 1906, offering harrowing views of English class inequalities and the devastating effect of alcoholism on the poor:

As they passed through the narrow, dirty, foul-smelling streets, they found that the dwellers in the wretched buildings on each side of the street had deserted their dark “holes” for the warm stones and pleasant sunshine of the street. The pavement swarmed with children,—dirty, ragged, puny children. They sprawled over the sidewalks on to the street on each side, until there was hardly room for the two men to pass in the middle of the street. Women lounged in the doorways and on the steps. Willard looked at them in a sort of a dazed horror. This was his first experience in the slums. He was told that these women were the mothers of the children, and this fact explained much to him. The women gossiped with each other. Some were scolding their children, some were quarreling with their neighbors, some were talking and laughing in loud, harsh voices. Some were bringing ale from the corner dram shop, while others were drinking from their big earthen mugs and giving sips to the babes. (27-28)

Here, the reform mode of Anderson’s writing focuses on the degrading influence of alcohol and poverty on mothers and children, demographics Anderson tends to idealize in his novels. As with the Rectangle in *In His Steps*, the Liverpool slum functions as a contrast to the middle-class settings of Anderson’s more genteel characters (and readers) as well as a site where “nominal” Christianity’s failure is most apparent. There, alcoholism is destroying the Loring family, who are relatives of Anderson’s American missionary protagonist, Willard Dean. Mrs. Loring, Willard’s mother’s cousin, tells of her husband, who “took to drink, and became very bad” before he died. Her son, Thomas is also an alcoholic who, along with his wife, “drink[s] up every penny they can spare; yes, and many a one that they ought not to spare, if they considered that their children needed bread and clothes” (34). Willard, in fact, comes upon his cousin Thomas in the streets,

passed out from drinking, with no one but his small daughter to tend to him. Unable to move by himself, Thomas is carried away by a police officer whose “duty [is] to take drunken people off the streets to jail” (55). Nora, Thomas’ sister, later apologizes to Willard for the incident. “It must be humiliating to find such relatives,” she says. Nora, herself, feels deeply betrayed by the many alcoholic men in her life. “I know no men,” she tells the missionaries. “I have no recollection of ever having known any. I know only brutes” (38).

One such brute is Dwight Thornton, Nora’s former fiancé, whose taste for “the demon drink had taken possession of the garnished house of the man” and ruined their engagement. Years later, Nora learns that he is begging for his livelihood near the home of her middle-class, tee-totaling brother, John, and tracks down his home, only to find his child hiding in the corner of a “dirty room.” Saddened by the squalid sight, she laments that “once there was manhood in Dwight Thornton,” but that manhood was now gone (112). As with Einer Gundersen in *The Castle Builder*, however, Dwight Thornton ultimately finds freedom from his debilitating alcoholism through the principles of Mormonism and the Word of Wisdom, which restore and augment his self-respect and masculinity. During Thornton’s first meeting with the missionaries, Elder Dean appeals to his sense of manliness, demanding to know why Thornton has “no hopes, no ambitions, no incentives to reform and become a man.” For Dean, the drunkard’s problems reside in his unmanly refusal to take control of his own life and rise to his divine potential, a failure he partly credits to the Protestant reformers whose doctrines about the lowliness of mankind lead already weak men to think of themselves as unworthy and worthless. To counteract this message, Willard teaches Thornton about the Mormon doctrine of eternal progression, which suggests humans, through self-mastery and a valiant application of Free Agency, can perfect their lives and become like God:

You have been taught to believe that you are such a mean, weak creature that you are powerless to help yourself. I tell you, my friend, that every man has within him a spark from the eternal God. Man is more than the world has dreamed of, and there is a closer connection between us and our Father in heaven than is believed or thought by religionists of the day. (122)

With this “closer connection” between God and man in mind, Dean teaches Thornton the Mormon “views on eating and drinking” to aid him as he “develop[s] his unborn strength and [...] make[s] it a permanent, ever-growing power” in his life (128-129).

In doing so, Dean makes a case for the Word of Wisdom as something one can *do*, by force of self will, to improve oneself outside of and beyond a traditional Protestant framework. Indeed, the action of obeying the Word of Wisdom succeeds for Thornton where a Protestant call for a public repentance, enacted in a ludicrous revival scene earlier in the novel, fails to elicit any change from the listless Thornton (see 119). Obeying the Word of Wisdom code, however, Thornton becomes “clean, quiet—a changed man,” worthy again of Nora’s love (159). Nora’s tee-totaling brother John, on the other hand, remains an ineffectual buffoon—not only because the women in his life have no respect for him and largely ignore his presence, but also because his beloved Protestantism does nothing to wean him away from the “obnoxious” and “annoying” habit of pipe-smoking, a symbol of his lack of manly self-control (161).¹⁵ He is “a weakling” who does not “have character enough to move in the direction of either right or wrong” (100) because his Protestant belief in salvation by faith alone makes him a man of inaction:

He and those who believe with him hold that they of themselves can do nothing for their salvation. They have convinced themselves that they are nothing; they delight to call themselves ‘worms of the dust, good-for-nothings, wholly corrupt,’

etc. What does such a course of mind training lead to? Why, weakness of character; inability to take the initiative in anything; loss of power to take hold and to overcome temptation; lack of courage and of manhood. (105)

Willard Dean's portrait of John Loring, the weakling Protestant, echoes the "nominal" Christian of Sheldon's *In His Step*, thus seconding its critique of the Protestant establishment and its indifference to the world beyond its class. However, underwriting Anderson's characterization of Mormonism as consonant with the social gospel movement is a narrative that presents Mormonism as a more effective alternative to Protestantism's largely ineffectual (and even harmful) reform efforts. Speaking with the double-tongue of Babylon and Zion, it participates in and promotes the social and literary conversations of Progressive-Era America, encouraging readers to take direct action in ameliorating the poverty and alcoholism in society; yet the amelioration it encourages is distinctly—even aggressively—Mormon. Like Anderson's City of Zion in *Added Upon*, it insists upon Mormonism being the answer to all social ills. Protestantism, including even the active kind found in novels by both Bellamy and Sheldon, is not enough. Indeed, as characters like Dwight Thornton and John Loring indicate, too often it is part of the problem.

IV.

With the exception of *Added Upon*, which remained in print until the first decade of the twenty-first century, Nephi Anderson's novels have not enjoyed an enduring place in Mormon cultural memory. As some of the first Mormon novels, however, they represent important early efforts to wrest the novel from its anti-Mormon moorings and use it for the purpose of articulating Mormonism's place at the turn of the new century. As Richard Cracroft notes, they were an earnest effort to "turn [...] positive Mormon experience into significant art," yet, in

retrospect, they often were too defensive and self-aggrandizing in their representation of the Mormon people, its history, and beliefs to appeal to an audience beyond the borders of Zion (13). Moreover, Anderson's clear prejudice against Protestant "sectarians," acquired through years of defending the Church against allegations from people like O. R. Miller, limited the extent to which his works could participate in multidirectional cultural exchanges with non-Mormon works. In taking a defensive stance against the Protestant mainstream, that is, Anderson's works closed themselves off to more thoughtful engagements with the outside world. Had Anderson lived at a time when Mormons were more accepted by society, his fiction might have been more interested in building bridges between Mormons and their neighbors. However, at the turn of the century, the decades of animosity between the Mormons and their Protestant detractors was such that Mormons still held tenaciously to the "not quite" that separated them from mainstream America. For them, Mormonism remained a utopia, its many concessions to the challenge of assimilation notwithstanding.

Anderson's last novel, to be sure, gestures toward greater self-reflection and mainstream assimilation. In *Dorian* (1921), the title character is a young Mormon man whose coming-of-age is marked by episodes that underscore the complex relationship between Mormonism's pioneer past and its uncertain post-utopian present. An aspiring scientist, he is tutored by Uncle Zed, "a little frail old man with clean white hair and beard," who serves as the novel's representative of the Mormon pioneer generation (46). Under his guidance, Dorian learns to appreciate the "doctrinal articles" of Mormon pioneer theologians and develop a Mormon worldview that buoys him spiritually as he begins more secular studies (143). Significantly, though, while Dorian views his religious education as a necessary check on his secular education, neither he nor Uncle Zed considers it to be a rival form of knowledge or learning. Rather, Dorian takes a broader,

boundary-crossing view of religious learning as a medium through which he can “comprehend better” and “more fully understand” secular learning with its “faithless” and even “Godless” perspectives. In a sense, Dorian sees his education in the teachings of his pioneer forbearers as a necessary compliment to other forms of learning, thus eliminating a dualistic view of knowledge as something either wholly secular or spiritual.¹⁶ Uncle Zed’s instruction, therefore, is elemental in this view. He encourages Dorian to “make it his life’s mission to work to learn the truths of science and harmonize them where necessary with the revealed truth” (119).

The novel follows this theme to the end. In the last chapter, a more mature Dorian is preparing to leave the geographical boundaries of Mormonism and enter the Ivy League, where he hopes to meet Uncle Zed’s challenge of becoming a kind of intellectual ambassador for the Church and its doctrines. Yet, Dorian regards his debt to Uncle Zed with some ambivalence, as his maturation has caused him to recognize some of the dogmatic shortcomings of his mentor’s pioneer-era theology. Indeed, like Anderson’s other novels, *Dorian* contains several discussions between characters about Mormon doctrine and culture, but unlike previous novels, these exchanges in *Dorian* do not proceed in a tract-like manner, but rather serve as “obstacles to Dorian’s real understanding [...] of life” (Cracroft 10). For instance, one aspect of Dorian’s coming-of-age involves a difficult reassessment of lessons he received from Uncle Zed about eternal progression and sin. Upon his death, Uncle Zed leaves Dorian a letter in which he argues that “Man belongs to an order of beings whose goal is perfection,” that “[t]he way to that perfection is long and hard, narrow and straight,” and “[a]ny deviation from that path is sin” (137). He also outlines the consequences of sin in no uncertain terms, drawing a vividly bleak picture of the existence—mortal and post-mortal—of those who fail to follow God’s laws with exactness:

Banishment from the place where God lives is death. By the operations of a natural law, a person who fails to correspond with a celestial environment dies to that environment and must go or be placed in some other, where he can function with that which is about him. God's presence is exalted, holy, glorified. He who is not pure, holy, glorified cannot possibly live there, is dead to that higher world. [...] This is inevitable—it cannot be otherwise. Immutable law decrees it, and not simply the ruling of an all wise power. The soul who fails to attain to the celestial glory, fails to walk in the straight and narrow path which leads to it. Such a person wanders in the by-paths called sin, and no power in the universe can arbitrarily put him in an environment with which he cannot function. 'To be carnally minded is death', said Paul. 'The wages of sin is death', or in other words, he who persistently avoids the Celestial Highway will never arrive at the Celestial Gate. He who works evilly will obtain evil wages. (139-40)¹⁷

While Dorian initially accepts Uncle Zed's views on the "wages of sin," he is forced to reevaluate them after his friend Carlia becomes pregnant by Jack Lamont, the local non-Mormon who drugged and raped her. Assuming the pregnancy to be the result of consensual sex, Dorian becomes "benumbed into inactivity." His notion of the "wages of sin," nurtured through long discussions with Uncle Zed, renders him incapable of thinking of Carlia as a person. For him, her apparent sexual sin transforms her almost into the embodiment of the sin itself:

Dorian had not found Carlia Duke; instead, he had found something which appeared to him to be the end of all things. Had he found her dead, in her virginal purity, he could have placed her [...] safely away in his heart and his hopes; but this!... What more could he now do? (173)

Dorian finds himself in a theological and moral quandary. On the one hand, “[a]s far back in his boyhood as he could remember, he had been taught the enormity of sexual sin,” so that the very thought of what Carlia seems to have done “stand[s] as a repellent specter between them.” On the other hand, Dorian recognizes his own role in Carlia’s actions and decisions:

He remembered how she used to run from him, and then at other times how she would cling to him as if she pleaded for a protection which he had not given. The weak had reached out to the strong, and the stronger one had failed. If ‘remorse of conscience’ is hell, Dorian tasted of its bitter depths, for it came to him now that perhaps because of his neglect, Carlia had been led to her fall. (173-4)

In recalling his prior rejections of Carlia—motivated, as they were, by his pursuit of “higher things”—Dorian recognizes that he has grossly misapplied Uncle Zed’s teachings and failed to live up to his own ideals. Even with this recognition of error, however, Dorian remains horrified at the thought of loving and marrying Carlia without “her virginal purity.”

Gradually, Dorian’s horror at Carlia’s apparent sin subsides as he earnestly reassesses Uncle Zed’s instruction and modifies his personal understanding of Mormon doctrine. After passing a “long night” that seems to be one long “hideous nightmare,” Dorian awakes on a Sunday morning only to be unsettled by a “vision” of Uncle Zed raising a hand “in warning against sin.” Immediately, though, Dorian “[seems] to hear a voice read” Christ’s parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18.11-13 (175). The parable has an immediate effect on Dorian, counteracting the rigidity of Uncle Zed’s teachings and permitting him to recognize Carlia as an individual, not a sin. Dorian’s change is not immediate, to be sure, and he continues to doubt, even after he learns of the rape, whether “his love for [Carlia]” will be able to counteract the “repulsion” he feels over the ordeal (190). Carlia, likewise, aware of Uncle Zed’s teachings

about the “wages of sin,” feels unworthy of Dorian’s love and compassion. It is only after Dorian admits his own imperfections and asks that they “forget everything else but the fact that [they] love each other” that they begin to find their way out of Uncle Zed’s long shadow (197, 215). In his ambivalence toward Uncle Zed’s pioneer-era theology, Dorian looks upon the Mormon past with post-utopian eyes. While he continues to affirm the core principles of righteous living, including the reality of sin and the need for repentance, he nevertheless rejects Uncle Zed’s dogma that would leave someone like Carlia convinced that she was spiritually dead and hopelessly damned.

Surprisingly, in the original manuscript of *Dorian*, Dorian’s epiphany about the lost sheep happens in a Protestant Church, and the voice that speaks the parable is that of a minister. Carlia’s pregnancy, likewise, is the result of a consensual affair, rather than rape, which, aside from explaining the inconsistency of the novel’s problematic notion that Carlia is accountable for her rape, forces Dorian to confront with more immediacy his response to an individual’s willful violation of the community’s moral boundaries. In both cases, Anderson’s original version questions the established boundaries of the insular Mormon community, raising the possibility that a Protestant “sectarian” could prove an earnest vessel of Christian truth, and one guilty of sexual sin—particularly a women—could arrive at the “Celestial Gate.” Unfortunately, Anderson left no clues for why he rewrote these passages. Perhaps his personal prejudices against “sectarians” got the better of him, or he felt the “sectarian” setting of Dorian’s epiphany pushed his careful critique of Mormon culture and Pioneer-era dogma too far and suggested too much about the limits of Mormonism’s utopian capacity to supply every answer. Perhaps he worried, further, that Carlia’s consensual relationship with Jack Lamont would make her too unsympathetic in the puritanical eyes of his Mormon readers, and thus turn them against her and

the novel. Perhaps the changes were not even his decision, but the result of a cautious publisher's or editor's request. What little we know about them are only enough to give us a sense of how the novel could have stretched its boundaries and the boundaries of the Mormon community.

In a sense, then, the published version of *Dorian*, along with Anderson's other novels, illustrates Jameson's notion that utopias "disclose the limits of our own imagination of the future, the lines beyond which we do not seem able to go in imagining changes in our own society and world" (23). To be sure, these works are only utopian in their wish for a world where Mormonism provides a panacea for the world's problems; yet, consistently, Anderson's portrayal of this wish depends upon both a Protestant adversary—an antagonism Anderson cannot seem to overcome even in his most assimilationist mode—and an apologetic understanding of Mormonism that ignores its own need for utopian reform. Still, despite the limits of their utopian imagination, Anderson's novels do mark a significant change of direction in Mormonism's response to the challenge of assimilation in the early twentieth century. In matters of marriage and family, for example, while his novels are rather conventional in their affirmation of monogamy, chastity, and traditional gender roles, their conventionality radically reconfigures how Mormons historically approached such issues. To the extent that these reconfigurations are post-utopian enclaves where the future of Mormonism and its place in broader society is mediated and further reconfigured, they also provided new space for further developments and directions in the Mormon novel. Indeed, as the following chapter will show, the failure of Anderson's novels to self-reflect on their own utopian claims—to see, in a sense, their own prejudices and provinciality—becomes a space of revision for later writers whose desire for greater cultural exchange between Mormonism and the nation is imperiled by factions within the church that seek to reestablish (and reinforce) the boundaries between Babylon and Zion.

Anderson's novels, therefore, while limited by their apologetic utopianism, provide an important foundation for understanding later developments in the Mormon novel.

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¹ According to Terryl L. Givens, whose *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (1997, 2013) remains the most thorough study of the anti-Mormon novel, the genre surfaced in America during the 1850s and numbered around fifty-six works by the turn of the century.

The influence of these works in shaping public opinion about Mormonism cannot be overstated. In *Viper on the Hearth*, Givens recounts an incident in 1867 when Representative T. E. Noell quoted the humorous anti-Mormon fiction of Artemus Ward as a factual authority during a debate on women's suffrage. Writes Givens, "'When Artemus Ward was in Utah...' may serve to introduce a tall tale or a deadly serious episode, and perhaps politicians are especially vulnerable to confusing the two. But the pervasiveness of this disregard for distinctions between fiction and fact gives a universalizing quality to anti-Mormon rhetoric that is especially resistant to rebuttal." Causing further confusion were texts like *The Fate of Madame La Tour*, which followed the fictional narrative with affidavits against the Mormons (127-128).

² As O. R. Miller's letter to Nephi Anderson suggests, progressive reformers looked suspiciously at the Mormons precisely because they saw polygamy as a morally corrupting influence. However, considering the existing tendencies to racialize Mormons, and view them as degenerates (see Introduction), Miller's criticism of Mormonism, particularly his condemnation of Joseph F. Smith's decision to continue to have children with his plural wives after the Manifesto, can be read not only as a reaction to the moral depravity of polygamy, but also as evidence of existing anxieties about the atrophy of the racial strength and purity of the nation.

This context helps to explain Anderson's response to Miller. He offers a glowing portrait of Smith's children as model progressives, which contrasts strikingly with and refutes Bartholow's report a half-century earlier (see Introduction). But he also offers even more glowing praise for President Smith himself:

I know President Smith. He is a MAN, a great, big, kind, open-hearted man, who would do good to all men and harm to none. When I think of him, and then of the little, mean, bigoted, long-faced hypocrites who hate him with all the power <that> their shrunken souls are capable, I say, "Lord, have mercy on them. They know not what they do". Then when I see <those> who style themselves ministers of the meek and lowly One rail in their rage, I wonder if they have ever read the Sermon on the Mount.

Here, Anderson presents Joseph F. Smith not simple as "a MAN," but as a Christian man—even Christ-like man—whose kindly, moral character has, like that of Jesus himself, been sorely abused by those who "know not what they do." In making this comparison, as well as in contrasting the noble manliness of Joseph F. Smith with the bigotry and hypocrisy of his critics, Anderson subverts and reverses the discursive code observers like Bartholow and Miller had used to set themselves physically and morally apart from Mormons. Those who hated Joseph F. Smith, in other

words, bear in Anderson's mind the physical, moral, and intellectual markings of degeneracy in their "little" size, "long-faced hypocrisy," "shrunk souls," and incapacity to read the words of Jesus. The Mormons, on the other hand, insofar as they are embodied in their leader, are the pinnacle of the species.

³ I use of the term "Protestant establishment," as Kathleen Flake does in her book *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (2004), to refer to the "five historic denominations (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist)" as well as any other Protestant denomination that set aside doctrinal differences with the historical five to join them in their opposition to Mormonism in the early twentieth-century (2-3).

⁴ A largely middle-class endeavor, the Progressive Era (1890-1920) was an idealistic response to anxieties that emerged following late-nineteenth-century economic hardships, unregulated industrial capitalism, increases in urban poverty and immigration, government corruption, labor and racial unrest, and waning Christian faith. Seemingly threatened in every direction by evil and menacing forces, middle-class Americans took action to promote—and preserve—their way of life, calling specifically upon the federal government to intervene and carry out the necessary reforms in a manner more aggressive than it had in the previous century. Their goal, ultimately, was to transform and remake society "in their own middle-class image," thus ensuring the primacy of their values against those of "the nation's feuding, polyglot population" (McGerr xiv-xv). Working through the government seemed ideal, in fact, because of its potentially broad reach, which had the capacity to influence smaller, constituent communities "[t]hrough the imposition of rules and regulations with uniform penalties," thus incorporating them into centralized national projects and fostering a kind of "predictability in a changing world" (Yamin 90).

⁵ To illustrate, a film version of *Riders of the Purple Sage* became a matter of concern for the LDS Church Presidency in the early 1920s. In a 24 August 1921 letter to Senator Reed Smoot, Church President Heber J. Grant praised the senator's efforts to "[prevent] the motion picture houses from showing Zane Grey's novel 'Riders of the Purple Sage.'" Grant, a close friend of Nephi Anderson, seemed to believe that the film would prove harmful to the Church's already fragile reputation, and mused that the Church needed to take a firm stand against it:

Don't you think that if it could get to the National Board of Motion Picture Review that litigation is likely to follow if exhibition of this scandalous picture is not prohibited that good results might obtain? It would seem to me that large damages could be collected and I don't know but that the advertising we would get might be beneficial. Sometimes I think we are too passive and do not defend ourselves as we should against such onslaught. (Clark 203)

Based on a follow-up letter from Grant to Smoot dated 14 September 1921, Smoot's efforts to suppress the "objectionable picture" were to some extent successful, a result that left Grant "much gratified" (Clark 204).

⁶ Ironically, Mormons 130 years later are among the most visible and vocal champions of "the union of one man with one woman only" in twenty-first-century debates over same-sex marriage. While their motivations for opposing same-sex marriage are many, including the typical evangelical appeal to biblical authority, lingering associations of Mormons with polygamy—along with the increasing visibility of polygamous Mormon Fundamentalism in the news and popular culture—likely account for part of the intensity of their defense of traditional marriage.

⁷ Considering the novel form's heavy reliance on the marriage plot, it is likely the Mormon novel did not emerge until the post-utopian condition allowed monogamy to function as an appropriate framework for Mormon story telling.

⁸ Yamin further shows that progressives in the early twentieth century saw marriage as a site where ideals of civic order, national identity, uniformity, and citizenship—not to mention the processes of assimilation and naturalization—could be affirmed and regulated. Therefore, how the nation constructed the boundaries of marriage through discourse and law greatly affected not only how Americans thought about morality, sexuality, and the family, but also how they saw themselves as a nation and homogenous community of citizens (89-90, 92). For example, many progressives, spurred by the ideologies of nativism and eugenics, viewed with no small anxiety the arrival of shiploads of immigrants from Europe. To their horror, this flood of non-American Others seemed not only to challenge the established Anglo-Saxon male hegemony, but also to possess an alarming capacity for reproducing more of their "genetically undesirable" kind. Along with stricter immigration laws, therefore, progressive reformers instituted a series of marriage laws to gain greater control over who could and could not marry and have children, and thus reduce the likelihood of national degeneration (Yamin 91-92).

⁹ In novels like *Marcus King*, *Mormon*, *The Castle Builder*, *Piney Ridge Cottage*, *A Daughter of the North*, *John St. John* and *Dorian*, where male and female characters feel strong attractions to multiple potential marriage partners, Anderson affirms the plurality of desire that polygamy championed. However, these affirmations never move beyond the level of platonic desire, except in the case of John St. John's polygamous union with Dora and Jane. In most cases, death or decision intervenes to ensure and uphold the monogamous standard.

¹⁰ By the time its sequel, *Equality*, was published in 1897, the novel had already sold 400,000 copies, making it the ideal novel to imitate for writers eager to achieve similar success. In fact, *Looking Backward* inspired a number of imitative works, including Richard C. Michaelis' *Looking Further Forward: An Answer to "Looking Backward"* by Edward Bellamy (1890), W. W. Satterlee's *Looking Backward and What I Saw* (1890), Arthur Dudley Vinton's *Looking Further Backward* (1890), Ludwig A. Geissler's *Looking Beyond* (1891), J. W. Roberts' *Looking Within* (1893), and Rabbi Solomon Schindler's *Young West: A Sequel to Edward Bellamy's Celebrated Novel "Looking Backward"* (1894) (Wegner 63, Roemer 328-331).

¹¹ That neither *Added Upon* nor *Beyond Arsareth* make these lists suggests the possibility that more contributions to the utopian genre exist, possibly from other minority, ethnic, or niche groups whose literary and print culture remains to be uncovered.

¹² Roemer, to be sure, notes that these novels, while abundant, were not always as popular and best-selling as *Looking Backward* (310). Advocating changes that usually appealed only to certain population demographics, they often failed to find a broad audience among minorities and immigrants who generally felt outside of the mainstreams of American Victorian society, the target audience of most of these novels. Moreover, though they were products of American Victorianism—particularly its optimistic belief in rationality, order, and technological and social progress—they could alienate readers by deviating from normative notions about modernization, competition, work ethic, and women's role in society (323). Nevertheless, as Jean Pfaelzer shows, the late-nineteenth century proved particularly fertile for the utopian imagination because utopian novels could offer solutions for the "recurrent industrial depressions" that plagued the rapidly changing times. Whether they proposed the "cooperative remedies" of "[p]rogressive, pastoral, and feminist utopias," or the "'trickle-down' theories" of pro-industry "conservative, dystopian, and apocalyptic utopias," these novels promised the attractive possibilities of a stable, changeless society (Pfaelzer 8, 16). Indeed, as Alan Trachtenberg notes, "this body of popular romance and utopian speculation" offered "a hope for rationality, for the control so wanted in present affairs" through images of a world where "science and the machine" combine to bring order out of social chaos (49).

¹³ Interestingly, Anderson's Zion makes no reference to Protestantism, although it ensures that freedom of religion is permitted in Zion. Earlier in the novel, however, Protestantism plays a largely antagonistic role in the way Protestant characters oppose his protagonists' decisions to join with Mormonism. Indeed, in the first part of the novel, which is set in premortality, one character relates the sad news that

A certain family of earth-children has fallen into evil ways. Not being very strong for the truth before they left us, their experiences in the other world have not made them stronger. This family, it seems, has become rooted in false doctrine and wrong living, so that those who come to them from us partake also of their error and unbelief of the truth. As you know, kinship and environment are powerful agencies in forming character, and it appears that none of the Father's children have so far been able to withstand the tendency to wrong which is exerted on all who come to this family. (23-24)

Later, in the second part of the novel, this wayward "family" is distinctly Protestant. Their religious commitments to Methodism or the Baptist faith are socially-motivated or expressed self-righteously. Moreover, they are either indifferent or hostile to Mormonism, even to the point of shunning relatives who embrace it (see 123-125). Significantly, in Zion, Paulus encourages the King of Poland to extend religious liberty to his subjects and "see to it" that missionaries from Zion "are not molested while peaceably promulgating religious doctrines" (181-182).

¹⁴ In carrying out these efforts, proponents of the Social Gospel looked to a manly Jesus to counterbalance the unmanly connotations religious devotion had acquired during the Victorian age, with its sentimentality and androgynous, wavy-haired Christ. Social reform required strong Christian men who followed in the steps of an intensely virile Jesus (Putney 40-43, Curtis 394-395).

¹⁵ Nora, likewise, shows obedience to the Word of Wisdom is not only useful for men, but also for women. She acquires renewed health as she lives the Word of Wisdom. Under its influence, there is "more color in her cheeks, and they [are] rounder." Moreover, she is "considerable money ahead" and has "gained in flesh and very much in spirits" (103-104).

¹⁶ Dorian's desire to find common ground between Mormonism and other systems of knowledge seems consistent with the efforts of post-Manifesto Mormons in the realms of early twentieth-century American capitalism, politics, and academics. Like them, he seems open to "inspired accommodation" and "creative adjustment" in his dealings with those who differ ideologically from him—although, to be sure, he is not without a belief in the superiority of Mormonism to the ideas of "Sir Oliver Lodge and Lord Kelvin." Indeed, in outlining his academic goals, he grandly states:

I must be greater than either of them [i.e. Lodge and Kelvin]. I must know all they know, and more; and that is possible, for I have the 'Key of Knowledge' which even the most learned scholar cannot get without obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. (222)

Even with the "apparent egotism of [this] proposition," though, Dorian's approach to knowledge and learning is mostly one of openness to new and challenging ideas, including those that seem to contradict his understanding of truth. As an aspiring scholar, for instance, Dorian studies Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. While he initially finds the book "rather heavy," he nonetheless comes to "[learn] what the scientist [is] 'driving at'" through diligence and "close application." What is more, he discovers that the book seems to have "much truth in it" even though it contains "some things which [do] not agree with what he [has] been taught to be true." "[D]isturbed," but not deterred, by Darwin's theories, Dorian keeps an open mind; rather than retreat into his established notions of truth, he "[realizes] his lack of knowledge" and resolves to learn more, since "[more] knowledge must clear up any seeming contradiction" between his understanding of truth and Darwin's (72).

¹⁷ A derivative of his own religious instruction, Uncle Zed's "straight and narrow path" echoes the discourse of an earlier era of Mormon history, the Mormon Reformation (1856-1857), when prominent Church leaders like Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Jedediah M. Grant advanced the "notion that wickedness had penetrated the cordon of purity that was supposed to protect" the Latter-day Saints from the evils of the world, calling for a widespread "process of purging the evil elements in their midst" in order to bring about the "purification of every Mormon" (Taysom 176).

According to historian Stephen Prothero, it was also a time when Mormons temple rites for the salvation living (and dead), which were centered on commitments to personal righteousness, seemed to "[edge] out Jesus as the mediator between God and humanity" (183). Indeed, Prothero argues that these pioneer-era Mormons viewed salvation through Christ as only "a step (and a relatively minor one) along the road to exaltation to godhood," an eternal "pilgrimage" in which "rites were more important than words, works more important than faith, and (for all practical purposes) the church more important than Jesus" (184). Redemption through Christ, therefore, while important for pioneer-era Mormons, "was [then] understood as one scene in the broader drama of the plan of Plan of Salvation." Christ, in a sense, was best viewed not as an intermediary figure on the cross, but "as an example of obedience to God" in the Garden of Gethsemane (185).

Chapter Three

Removing the “smiling mask”:

Faithful Realism in an Age of Correlation and Retrenchment

“If it be true that Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel caused a war, a greater novel with deeper meaning and broader significance and finer expression may bring a chaotic world to unity and peace.”—Thomas E. Cheney, 1950

“In my view, the person within the church best suited to propose desirable change is the faithful Mormon liberal, who by virtue of wide reading and a curious, rational mind is instinctively attracted to the expanding edge of civilization, where the old is constantly transformed into the new in science, art, morality, and dozens of other categories.”—Levi S. Peterson, 2001

I.

By the mid-twentieth century “positive-thinkers” had hijacked the Church. So argued Samuel W. Taylor, at least, in his 1967 essay “Peculiar People, Positive Thinkers, and the Prospect of Mormon Literature,” a sullen response to post-utopian Mormonism’s largely successful efforts to assimilate into mainstream American society. For Taylor, a Mormon novelist best known today as the author of “A Situation of Gravity” (1943), the short story that served as the basis for the Walt Disney blockbusters *The Absent-Minded Professor* (1961) and *Son of Flubber* (1963), assimilation had made Mormons drunk on “the sweet wine of praise” and forgetful of and embarrassed by their former peculiarities. To make matters worse, public relations had come to replace prophecy as the guiding light of the Church, and hosts of image-

conscious “positive thinkers”—or public relations-minded Mormons—now tirelessly promoted “a never-never land of Mormonism that presented a lovely (if unreal) façade for the outside world to admire and converts to embrace.” This façade particularly refashioned Mormonism’s controversial past of utopian experimentation, ornamenting it “with gilded myth and glittering distortion” until the “history of polygamy was rejected entirely” and “pioneer attitudes toward such things as the Word of Wisdom and the United Order retroactively underwent radical alteration” (20). In short: Taylor believed the Mormon people had sold out. America had offered them a mess of pottage and they had eaten it with relish.¹

As perhaps the most prominent Mormon novelist of his day, it is unsurprising that Taylor’s concerns about assimilation and the rise of powerful “positive-thinkers” in post-utopian Mormonism focused particularly on the Mormon writers who were “caught in the intellectual hinge of this change” (21). Because they were deeply embedded in this image-conscious climate, Taylor believed that Mormon writers who wished to present their people realistically were unable to do so because “nit-picking criticism” and “pressure” from Salt Lake City had frequently compromised efforts to present alternatives to contemporary Mormonism’s “homogenized” ideal. Claiming that such pressure undermined Mormon writers’ efforts to garner critical acclaim and financially benefit from their works, he argued that Mormon literature had “softened in degeneration and decay [...] until it became the stuff of house organs and publicity handouts” (21). To be in the Mormon community, he reasoned, the Mormon writer had to play it safe or risk rejection and marginalization. Indeed, Taylor claimed that he could “count among [his] friends a number of [writers] whose fine talents [lay] fallow because they realize[d] that the way to advancement or even acceptance in the Mormon Church [was] by wearing the smiling mask of the positive-thinker” (23).

To be sure, in making this assessment of mid-century Mormonism, Taylor confessed to “over-simplification” (20). However, his characterization of the ways Mormonism’s twentieth-century ethos differed from that of nineteenth-century Mormonism was not far off the mark. As the previous chapter recounts, early twentieth-century assimilation efforts had transformed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in remarkable ways. While Mormons were still not on par with America’s Protestant institutions in terms of respectability, they were no longer stigmatized and persecuted to the degree they had been in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, as Taylor suggests, assimilation took a cultural toll on Mormon artistic expression precisely because so much of its success in assimilating depended upon the careful crafting of the Mormon image. Indeed, as the novels of Nephi Anderson suggest, post-utopian Mormon self-representation at the turn of the century actively promoted positive images of Mormons to countermand the grotesque caricatures that continued to inform negative public opinions about the Mormons well into the new century. As Taylor’s generation came of age, and experimented with a literature that depicted the warts of the Mormon people in tandem with their heroic, almost paradigmatic Americanness, they met with rebuke from both grass-roots and institutional voices, causing writers like Vardis Fisher, Virginia Sorensen, Maurine Whipple, and Paul Bailey—whom some critics have labeled “Mormondom’s Lost Generation”—to distance themselves from the Church or leave it all together (see Geary, Moos). Furthermore, as the American mainstream itself began to change in the years following World War II, particularly with the rise of civil rights movements and counterculture activism, the path to Mormon assimilation became less clear cut for the aging and decidedly conservative Salt Lake City leadership. For Mormons at midcentury, assimilation was no longer about arriving at a monolithic standard of Americanness, but rather a choice about the kind of Americanness it

wished to embrace (Bowman 205). Indeed, Taylor was not alone in his reservations about assimilation and his consequences. For many conservatives within the Mormon hierarchy, the Church's flirtation with mainstream acceptability presented new challenges that needed remedying.

In this chapter, I will look at ways Mormon novels at the end of the twentieth century responded to Mormonism's institutional reactions to its successful assimilation efforts and the new challenges this success presented in the face of rapid post-war changes in the United States. Specifically, I will focus on the Mormon literary movement called "Faithful Realism," a liberal post-utopian response to what sociologist Armand Mauss calls Mormonism's mid-century "retrenchment," a conservative—at times, ultra-conservative—post-utopian reaction to assimilation and the cultural revolutions (and counterrevolutions) it sparked within institutional Mormonism. With special attention to three texts—Levi S. Peterson's *The Backslider* (1986), Linda Sillitoe's *Sideways to the Sun* (1987), and John S. Bennion's *Falling Towards Heaven* (2000)—I will discuss how these works challenge retrenchment's conservatism and investigate their own ambivalence towards assimilation in order to understand how these texts envision alternative directions for post-utopian Mormonism's future. This challenge, I suggest, comes primarily through Faithful Realism's attention to marginalized figures and tropes of "passing," unorthodox depictions of charismatic or spiritual experiences, and border crossings and utopian enclaves that propose alternative approaches to the challenges of assimilation and change.

II.

To better understand the work of Faithful Realism, it is important to understand the cultural landscape to which it responds. In *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (1994), Armand Mauss characterizes "retrenchment" as the Mormons'

“reaction [...] against their own successful assimilation,” an effort to “recover some of the cultural tension and special identity” that had defined them throughout the nineteenth-century (x, 99). Importantly, this retrenchment was not the return to the utopian experimentation that Taylor romanticized in his essay, but rather the rise of a variety of institutional and cultural changes that included new emphasis on the exclusive authority and charismatic revelatory gifts of modern prophets and apostles, the importance of temple attendance and ritual, the necessity of expanding missionary efforts and church education, and the sacredness and centrality of the patriarchal family unit (85). Retrenchment, therefore, was only a partial retreat from assimilation; while its efforts to recover a sense of Mormon distinctiveness emphasized elements more or less unique to or indicative of Mormonism, they also sought to affirm and embrace the conservative values and mores that were then being challenged by the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Accordingly, as American religious denominations struggled to come to terms with a rapidly changing society, Mormons increasingly sided with “conservative and fundamentalist denominations” on moral and political issues (123-124). In the process, the “expansiveness, optimism, and interest in the [wider] world” that had characterized Mormon rhetoric in the first half of the century, which had manifested itself so abundantly in the fiction of Nephi Anderson, quickly gave way to rhetoric focused on the “moral decline of the world” and the dangerous “progress of human efforts in science, government, and culture” (Bowman 205).²

This mid-century retrenchment would have a lasting cultural influence on Mormonism throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first thanks largely to the success of its primary vehicle, the “correlation” movement (Mauss, “Rethinking” 3). The beginnings of this movement date back to the early twentieth century, when “the structure of the church resembled a patchwork quilt” rather than the highly-centralized hierarchical structure of

today's church (Prince 140). At the time, Mormon auxiliary organizations—principally the Relief Society, the Sunday school, the Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations, and the Primary—"functioned nearly autonomously" from the core ecclesiastical hierarchy of priesthood leaders, essentially allowing each auxiliary to create, finance, and promote its own programs and curricula as it saw fit (141). Such conditions cultivated a fine diversity of thought, yet they also allowed a certain amount of confusion, unwieldy overlap, and contradiction to exist in the instructional materials coming from each organization and priesthood quorum (Bowman 194). Initial attempts to correlate instructional materials occurred under the presidencies of Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant; yet, these efforts were largely unsuccessful (Prince 140-142). By the 1950s, however, several developments seemed to necessitate renewed correlation efforts. First, the unwieldy overlap between auxiliaries and quorums had become "almost unmanageable," resulting in "bureaucratic turf battles" and "power grabs" that were a source of tension within the church. Second, the international growth of the church to regions where the church membership was small and inexperienced led some leaders to question the practicality of "exporting" the "patchwork" institutional paradigm, especially without a centralized system for translating materials and adapting them to local cultures (Bowman 194). Third, the extraordinary influence of the auxiliaries over the development of church culture, identity, and doctrinal interpretation led some members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to worry that it was the auxiliaries, not them, leading and shaping the church (Prince 141-143). In 1960, therefore, Church President David O. McKay charged Elder Harold B. Lee, a commanding member of the Quorum of the Twelve, to chair a committee to correlate all church curricula and bring a sense of order to the worldwide church (Bowman 194-195).

Under the direction of Lee, however, correlation became something more than a simple harmonizing of lesson manuals and church programs for an international audience. Desiring to rein in the autonomy of the auxiliaries, Lee pushed for and succeeded in establishing centralized committees led by apostles to oversee all branches of church administration. Following the American corporate model, these committees oversaw a vast lower-level management network that proved “tremendously [successful] in solving the sorts of problems any large and growing organization might face” (Bowman 196). Under their ever-watchful eye, for example, church administration became more hierarchically structured and systematic, establishing a chain of command that delegated the most immediate concerns of the membership to local leaders, thus freeing the upper priesthood echelons to focus on broader concerns. Furthermore, all church meetings and materials became more standardized, simplified, and accessible for new members throughout the globe, causing Mormonism, as Jan Shipps notes, to feel “[a]lmost [like] a religious franchise” for the way it became institutionally the same in the United States as it was in Russia or Brazil (272).

The cultural impact of these reforms was enormous. While retrenchment attitudes about assimilation and the non-Mormon world were hardly crucial to the success of correlation, the centralization of church government under the priesthood hierarchy, coupled with its careful streamlining of church doctrines to eliminate “the possibility of theological controversy,” created a mechanism that allowed popular retrenchment attitudes to take root (Bowman 191). Indeed, as correlation’s critics point out, with the streamlining of church instructional resources came also the privileging of certain perspectives and interpretations over others. As Peter Wiley observes, correlation instituted a “permanent committee [...] with sweeping and often arbitrary powers of censorship over the doctrinal content of written materials” (Wiley 21). With retrenchment in the

air, it was hardly surprising that many of these approved materials stressed good behavior over theology and promulgated the pessimism, strict conservative values, and anti-intellectualism that retrenchment advocates used to combat secular society (Bowman 191). Furthermore, because these materials came with written and unwritten “[s]trictures on absolute conformity” to the guidelines they provided and the principles they endorsed, efforts to adapt these lessons “to local circumstance or audience” were (and continue to be) discouraged and even condemned, thus “stunt[ing] the intellectual initiative and spiritual self-reliance of the teacher” and making the resulting lessons “safe and unadventuresome” for both teachers and students (Givens 232). Clearly, under retrenchment, the intellectually-ambitious Mormon figured in Nephi Anderson’s Dorian Trent was no longer the ideal. Increasingly, the ideal Mormon was the “positive-thinker” of Taylor’s jeremiad: the conformist who sacrificed his intellectual ambitions to the apparent good of the whole church.

Ultimately, it was to this climate and mindset that Faithful Realism responded.

III.

The roots of faithful realism pre-date the 1960s correlation, reaching back to the 1930s and 1940s when several Mormon novelists broke from the idealized (and often self-justifying) Progressive-Era aesthetic of Nephi Anderson and his contemporaries to write nationally-published realistic historical novels about the Mormon pioneers. Frequently designated “Mormondom’s Lost Generation” for their equivocal relationship to Mormonism and tendency to live outside of the Mormon Corridor, these writers looked upon their pioneer legacy with an ambivalence that many Mormons took to be faithless and even heretical, causing some Mormons to question whether literary realism could do the Mormon story justice.³ One such Mormon was John A. Widtsoe, an apostle in the Church and editor of the *Improvement Era*, the Church’s

official organ. Reviewing Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* (1940), now a classic of "Lost Generation" Mormon fiction, Widtsoe complained that the novel "follows in method modern 'literary realism'" in a way that "detracts from its beauty, and adds no strength" (93). He made similar claims in his review of Virginia Sorensen's *A Little Lower than the Angels* (1942), which praised the author's "style and expression," yet lamented that in its "eager grasping for modern unlovely realism," it "allowed place" for "some trivial and repulsive episodes" involving bed-wetting and "the sex temptation." He also took issue with the novel's portrayal of "Joseph Smith and his associates" as "ordinary," which made them seem to his critical eye as "rather insipid milk and water figures" (380).⁴

Less than a decade later, however, some Mormon critics warmed to the idea of realistic depictions of Mormonism. Writing in the *Improvement Era* in March 1950, Thomas E. Cheney, an English professor at Brigham Young University, expressed hope that Mormon writers "in the near future" would write non-didactic stories that balanced "the good side of [Mormon] culture" and "the evil, the naive." Such a fiction, he argued, would find unprecedented success in the world because it would be "objective, convincing in treatment and, above all, mature in sentiment." At the same time, however, while these stories would "move to the vanguard" of the literary world through "truth and wisdom," they would not compromise on the progressive "moral purpose" that had characterized Mormon fiction since earlier in the century (214). Cheney's Mormon realism, in other words, would not be party to the anxious disillusionment of the early postmodern novels of the long 1950s (1946 to 1964) nor to what M. Keith Booker calls their "failure to project viable utopian alternatives to the present social order" of Cold War paranoia and consumer capitalism (4, 7-8). Indeed, in 1950, Cheney remained almost quixotically utopian about this future Mormon literature's capacity for reforming the world. He

predicted that it would be written “[f]or the glory of God and the betterment of mankind,” the harbingers of a Zion of global peace. “If it be true that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel caused a war,” Cheney reasoned, referring to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’s role in bringing about the American Civil War and emancipation, then it did not seem out of the question that “a greater novel with deeper meaning and broader significance and finer expression [could] bring a chaotic world to unity and peace” (214). For Cheney, that “greater novel” was to be the product of a Mormon writer’s pen.

As Samuel W. Taylor’s essay on Mormon “positive-thinking” suggests, however, Cheney’s lofty vision had still not come to pass twenty years later. In the interim, retrenchment Mormonism had taken hold and was gaining strength through Harold B. Lee’s correlation reforms. While ostensibly utopian in its efforts to define the Mormon people against certain elements of mid-century America’s mass culture, aspiring to create what Jameson calls a “pocket of stasis” for mainstream critique (15), retrenchment was nevertheless anti-utopian in its attachment to and identification with America’s white conservative middle-class establishment. For Taylor, such a response to the excesses of assimilation was less a step in a direction that would restore the cultural tensions that had given Mormonism life in the nineteenth century than a union with the beast. Taylor himself wished to identify instead with the spirit of rebellion and protest of the 1960s counterculture, viewing liberal activist causes as a way for Mormon literature—at least—to recapture the potency and utopian dynamism lost in assimilation. Indeed, he believed that “most good and creative writing is basically the literature of protest,” that the artist was to be an “interpreter,” a “crusader,” a “non-conformist,” and “a dissenter who crie[d] out the faults of his world in his attempt to make a better one.” Applying this utopian view to his contemporary moment, Taylor looked particularly to racist LDS policies, which disallowed black

men of African descent from holding the priesthood, as an obvious site where Mormon literature could make a difference. Referring to a Church speaker who “exhorted [his congregation] not to waste [their] time with ‘civil rights agitation and in preoccupation with ethics,’” Taylor asked, “Where is the Mormon writer to point out that human rights and ethics *are* a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ?”⁵ For him, this new approach to Mormon literature was to reflect *and* revolutionize life by ending the institutional “silence from within” (27). Under retrenchment, however, that kind of cultural work seemed to require artists to resist the very institution that served as the figurehead for their people—an action that could be interpreted as an act of treason rather than of religious faith and loyalty.

At this time, Taylor was not alone in longing for a more realistic and politically progressive Mormon literature to combat the “positive-thinking” and conservatism of retrenchment. Another critic, Karl Keller, expressed similar views in “On Words and the Word of God: The Delusions of a Mormon Literature,” an essay published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* shortly after Taylor’s. In it, Keller argued that Mormonism’s deeply-embedded puritanism, paranoia, and apocalypticism had created an atmosphere hostile to any literature that did not “conform” to “Mormon tenets of morality and taste” (14). Citing retrenchment tendencies to “incarnate” the devil in “Communism, college campuses, and literature and the arts”—tendencies famously shared by conservatives in Cold War America—he lamented that Mormons had acquiesced to “a kind of apocalypticism” that viewed “the productions of the world (and literature and the arts in particular) as evidence of the final end of this dispensation of time” (15).⁶ Cultivating such a “puritanic-paranoid-apocalyptic fundamentalism,” he reasoned, caused Mormons to regard the world and its intellectual development as wicked, thus fostering a “reactionary theology” that made the development of a rich Mormon literature “unlikely” (16).

Accordingly, Keller argued that Mormon literature would remain “a non-literature, a non-entity, even (as literature) nonsense” until Mormons and Mormon writers accepted that literature is “essentially anarchic, rebellious, shocking, analytical and critical, deviant, absurd, subversive, destructive” as well as socially and institutionally disruptive (18). For him, a “great work of *Mormon* literature” would make him “wrestle” with his faith and “recreate [his] own life on surer grounds of belief.” Furthermore, it would “be one that doesn't program life for [him], but leaves [him] free from constricting assumptions to wrestle, rebuild, and search for meaning. (19)⁷ It would not be “faith-promoting,” but “faith-destroying” for the ultimate purpose of making his faith stronger—a literature of “self-examination/world-examination/existence-examination, [...] a ‘destructive’ re-examination of the grounds of one’s own belief” (19).⁸

Significantly, at the end of both of their essays, Taylor and Keller observed that this kind of literature was starting to appear thanks to independent and uncorrelated publishing venues like the newly-founded *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, which Taylor called “a breath of cool air in the stifling atmosphere of our internal literature” (28, see Keller 19). Begun by graduate students at Stanford University in 1966 to celebrate and explore “the unique cultural and religious heritage and identity of the Mormon people”, *Dialogue* became the first of several periodicals to provide an alternative Mormon voice to the increasingly correlated intellectual material coming out of Salt Lake City (Mauss 63). Indeed, as the previous chapter recounts, Mormons had continued their rich print culture throughout the early twentieth century, with the Church and its auxiliary organizations sponsoring many official and semi-official journals and magazines. By midcentury, this continued to be the case, although a number of these publications, including the *Woman’s Exponent* and the *Young Woman’s Journal*, either went out of circulation or were absorbed into one of four official magazines: *The Children’s Friend*, *The*

Instructor, the *Relief Society Magazine*, and the *Improvement Era*. Of these periodicals, the latter two published the majority of Mormon short fiction, serialized novels, and novellas for the adult membership of the Church written at this time. Shortly after *Dialogue*'s founding, however, correlation reforms replaced all four magazines with three new magazines—*The Ensign*, *The New Era*, and *The Friend*. While these magazines continued to publish fiction for a time, their primary focus was on doctrinal, moral, and historical instruction and edification—not fiction. This was a point of concern for some readers, to be sure, who complained about the lack of fiction in the new magazines; however, while the editor's admitted that they had "reservations" about publishing serial fiction, they expressed a desire to "print two pieces of fiction in each issue" when "enough quality material" became available ("Our Readers Write"). This was never the case in any consistent way, however, and by the 1980s and 1990s, *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*, a similarly-toned magazine founded in 1975, became the primary source for Mormon short fiction for adults.

Ironically, as Correlation quietly phased fiction out of Church periodicals, Mormon fiction experienced "explosive growth" in other print venues. According to one study, 920 Mormon novels and short story collections were published between 1970 and 1999, an astounding increase over the 60 published between 1900 and 1969 (Bigelow 54, see Lamb 34). The study, conducted by librarians Connie Lamb and Robert S. Means of Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library, accounts for this influx in fiction by citing an influential talk given by apostle Spencer W. Kimball at BYU in 1967 (revised and published in the *Ensign* in 1977), which "encourage[d] members of the Church to produce great art including creative writing" (31). Another likely explanation can be found, however, in the migration of Mormon fiction from Church periodicals to independent, semi-official, and official Mormon publishers,

which discovered a market for sanitized long-form Mormon genre fiction in the 1970s and 1980s (Bigelow 58). Also, independent Mormon periodicals like *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Fiction* and *Sunstone* magazine continued to “aggressively foster Mormon fiction with higher literary standards and more authentic depictions of human reality” (Bigelow 56), which in turn gave rise to publishers like Signature Books, an early pioneer in publishing realistic Mormon novels. Indeed, in the twenty years after its founding in 1980, Signature published Mormon novels like Douglas Thayer’s *Summer Fire* (1983), Levi S. Peterson’s *The Backslider* (1986), Linda Sillitoe’s *Sideways to the Sun* (1987), Larry E. Morris’ *The Edge of the Reservoir* (1988), David Gagon’s *Honorable Release* (1992), Peterson’s *Aspen Marooney* (1995), Sillitoe’s *Secrets Keep* (1995), Susan Palmer’s *The Tabernacle Bar* (1997), Marion Smith’s *Riptide* (1999), Robert Hodgson Van Wagoner’s *Dancing Naked* (1999), and John S. Bennion’s *Falling Toward Heaven* (2000)—all of which approached the Mormon experience with an unflinching frankness that would hardly pass muster under the discriminating scrutiny of the correlation committee.

With this influx of Mormon novels came efforts to classify them against their Home Literature and Lost Generation predecessors, leading critic Richard H. Cracroft to propose two classifications for contemporary Mormon novels in his entry on the topic for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992): “Contemporary Home Literature” and “Faithful Realism.” For Cracroft, Contemporary Home Literature described works “[a]imed primarily at LDS teenagers and young adults” that “tell faith-promoting stories replete with hope, optimism, and happy endings.” Faithful Realism, on the other hand, referred specifically to the works of “[m]any late-twentieth-century Mormon writers [who were] both faithful Latter-day Saints and skilled writers” (“Novels” 839). Several years later, Eugene England, Cracroft’s colleague at Brigham Young University, appropriated Cracroft’s term “Faithful Realism” (with permission) and applied it to

all post-1960s works of Mormon literature, but more specifically to works that were “realistic and even critical about Mormon experience but profoundly faithful to the vision and concerns of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” (“Introduction” xxiii-xxiv). In doing so, England radically reconfigured the term to signify something more expansive than (and even partly in conflict with) what Cracroft had initially imagined. Indeed, as evidenced in his essay “Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature,” Cracroft favored a highly narrow definition of Mormon literature, arguing that *authentic* Mormon literature was that which was

woven out of the stuff of Mormonism and spun across a Mormon world view interlaced with Mormon essences, those often ethereal but real, ineffable but inevitable spiritual analogues and correspondences that convey Mormon realities, and without a sense of which no literature could be essentially Mormon.

(“Attuning” 51)

In making this case, Cracroft created a kind of literary manifesto for retrenchment Mormonism that relied heavily on appeals to essentialist notions of Mormon identity and orthodoxy to decry the sophistry of apparent secular and humanistic advances in Mormon literature and criticism.⁹ While he made no mention of “Faithful Realism” in this essay—he would coin the term shortly afterwards—he often used the word “faithful” interchangeably with “orthodox” to describe Mormon literature’s ideal audience: the “salt-of-the-earth, temple-recommend carrying” Latter-day Saints whose unambiguous devotion to the institutional church set them apart from Mormon intellectuals who “strap[ped] on the breastplate of humanism and lower[ed their] lances of Marxism, Deconstructionism, Post-Structuralism, Feminism, or Reformed New Criticism” to go “a-whoring across distant and exotic horizons after the shallow attractions of blind secularism,

visionless and perverse fault-seeking, skeptical and compromising humanism, and [...] glib but hollow and faithless voices of Babylon” (52, 54). A literature and criticism calibrated to the sensibilities of orthodox Latter-day Saints and “the spiritual essences of Mormonism,” he reasoned, was necessary for the future vitality and survival of Mormon letters. For him, there could be no “comfortable compromise” between sophic and the faithful perspectives even in realistic works (54-55).

England, while similarly alarmed by “sophic” tendencies in the Mormon left, did not align his understanding of “Faithful Realism” with Mormon orthodoxy; for him, rather, *Faithful* seemed to refer less to a writer’s personal and public commitment to institutional Mormonism, as it did for Cracroft, than to a broader and deeper commitment to “the vision and concerns of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.” Such an understanding, while essentialist in its own attention to a vaguely-defined “vision and concerns,” took a more moderate approach to defining the *Mormon* of Mormon literature by encouraging Mormon writers to think about their religion broadly, as Joseph Smith had when he asked his followers to “stretch” their minds “as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity” (qtd. in England xxx). To be sure, England was less precise about what constitutes Faithful Realism when, in the same essay, he applied the term to all post-1960s Mormon literature *and* realistic contemporary works that avoid “orthodox didacticism” *before* calling on Mormon writers to seek out a path not unlike what he calls the “radical middle” in another essay (see England, “Danger”).¹⁰ Even so, his notion of Faithful Realist works being “critical about the Mormon experience,” while remaining true to the “vision and concerns” of the Restoration, seems to convey a general sense of Faithful Realism being an approach to Mormon literature that is based less on retrenchment standards of behavior and belief than on one’s personal

commitment to aligning his or her life with the teachings of Jesus filtered through the lens of Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saint Restoration. Of course, both England's and Cracroft's notions of "Faithful Realism," while different on many points, can be understood as comparable efforts to reconcile the conservative values of retrenchment Mormonism with a realist aesthetic. The conflicting and imprecise way they use the term, nevertheless, shrouds it in ambiguity, making it difficult to use without qualification and additional intellectual work. In *People of Paradox*, for example, Terryl L. Givens applies the term to works that "redirect the considerable talent" of the Mormon Lost Generation and "merge it with a more orthodox sensibility," a definition that could accord well with either Cracroft or England depending on how one defines "orthodox" (297). In his subsequent discussion of faithful realism and the contemporary novel, however, Givens tends to side more with England than Cracroft in his selection of representative works; yet, in his discussion of Michael Fillerup's *Beyond the River* (1995), Givens suggests that the "worst excesses" of faithful realism "may be seen as too overtly faithful and not sufficiently realistic by today's critical standards," indicating an understanding not entirely distinct from Cracroft's essentialism (317).

This chapter seeks to avoid such ambiguity by approaching Faithful Realism in a new way, contextualizing it against the Mormon retrenchment and identifying ways it responds to institutional Mormonism's late-century efforts to find its place in the divisive landscape of the post-1960s United States. Accordingly, rather than reading Mormon novels from this era as expressions of faith or of the author's faith—as Cracroft, England, and Givens do—this chapter approaches them as ambivalent, post-utopian cultural responses to late twentieth-century exercises in and expressions of institutional power and community-making. As products of post-utopian Mormonism, that is, they imagine alternatives to the contemporary Mormon status quo,

seeking ways to mediate new cultural tensions arising from the ever-evolving challenge of assimilation. This approach, therefore, suggests that faithful realist works speak less to the faith and devotion of the author than to how the fictional text defines “faithful” in and through itself. Moreover, it proposes that Faithful Realism is less about redefining “faithful” through a realistic aesthetic than about depicting Mormon realities that complicate “correlated” notions of orthodoxy and enrich the utopian play so crucial to the Mormon novel’s layered voice and cultural project. Indeed, this chapter seeks a new way of thinking about faithful realism by looking at how late-twentieth-century Mormon novels use marginal(ized) figures and the “passing” trope, unorthodox spiritual experiences and fringe doctrine, and border-crossing utopian enclaves to respond to retrenchment Mormonism’s reaction to the challenge of assimilation, recover lost utopian energies, and imagine other alternatives—what Armand Mauss calls “course corrections”—to its conservative essentialism (see Mauss, “Rethinking” 21, 28). For this study, then, faithful realism does not describe all post-1960s Mormon literature, but rather those that engage critically, rather than complicitly, with correlation and retrenchment reforms.

IV.

Among the criticisms of retrenchment and correlation is the accusation that these reforms strengthened and propagated certain mindsets about Mormon identity already well-entrenched in the Latter-day Saint community. For instance, emphasis on obedience and conformity to Church leaders had been commonplace in Mormon discourse, and coexisted paradoxically with its emphasis on radical free agency, since Joseph Smith, facing early insubordination from his followers, dictated a revelation that confirmed his exclusive privilege “to receive commandments and revelations in this church” and counseled the faithful to “be obedient” and refrain from

“command[ing] him who is [...] at the head of the church” (D&C 28:2-4, see Givens 15-19). This mandate acquired new urgency, however, under correlation’s efforts to streamline the superfluous and eliminate fringe elements from Mormonism.¹¹ As Mauss suggests, the “centralized, standardized, and top-down managerial control associated with correlation” led to “a mentality that foster[ed] conformity, unquestioning obedience, and a proof-texting approach to religion” by the end of the century (167). This, in turn, encouraged Mormon leaders to “[tighten] the screws,” as Wiley puts it, “on a potentially errant membership.” Indeed, from Wiley’s perspective, correlation instituted a “new kind of authoritarianism” that caused “many members to question whether there was any room for tolerance and autonomy” in the bureaucracy (22). Furthermore, as Richard Poll suggests, it created a climate that left outliers who still had a “desire for acceptance in a conformity-stressing church” little choice but to engage in “a certain amount of role playing to conceal both doubts and disobedience” (74).

This kind of marginalization is a frequent motif in Faithful Realism novels, forming a backbone for its critique of retrenchment culture and the heavy-handedness of correlation’s privileging of certain Mormon identities and experiences over others. Typically, the main protagonist in these works is a practicing Mormon who nevertheless harbors doubts or regrets about his or her beliefs and is burdened by the authoritarian inflexibility of retrenchment Mormonism (or an analog) and the cultural sterility of the correlation era. Often, this inflexibility and sterility are embodied in an imagined, culturally-constructed God-figure, an oppressive heavenly patriarch whose regard for humanity and its sins amounts to little more than disdain. In certain cases, however, the LDS Church and its top leadership appear as appendages to this God, although, more typically, cultural traditions within the Mormon community, perpetuated by well-meaning but misguided local leaders and lay members, reinforce the dogmatic God-figure by

placing unnecessary premiums on extreme shows of obedience and conformity that ultimately drive the marginalized protagonist to explore unorthodox paths of Mormonness. John Bennion's *Falling Toward Heaven* (2000), for example, opens with protagonist Howard Rockwood straining under the restrictions of Mormon missionary life, which, for him, are "like thermal underwear, useful for safety and warmth, but hampering his free movement, the flow of his life." Behind these restraints is the oppressive God-figure, a "Father of the Universe" who "seemed to Howard to be a stern teacher, one focused on obedience to rules" and whose supreme, unquestioned authority makes him potentially "unpredictable, arbitrary, even cruel—an abusive father" (4). These views set Howard apart from Elder Peterson, his missionary companion, a conservative Mormon whom Howard sees as "a whole man, completely self-consistent" (11). Between the two, Peterson represents the correlated Mormon who has rote answers to every question and refuses to "take Howard's ramblings seriously," particularly when Howard's "ramblings" smack at leftism. When he is confronted by challenges to his faith and conservative principles, Peterson falls back on "the false familiarity of a salesman" and cultural clichés about "the crisis of values in the United States, teenage pregnancy, drugs, divorce, gangs, sexual perversion, high taxes, and the deficit" (34-35). This contrasts with Howard's predilection for deviating from their correlated teaching scripts, a tendency that solicits from Peterson a stern reminder to "Preach from the lessons" rather than indulge in doctrinal speculation and embellishment (59). Indeed, it is this unwillingness to abide by convention that at once marginalizes Howard in his retrenched and correlated Mormon community and identifies him as a seeker of faith for the reader.

An earlier and better-known example of this marginalized character type, however, is Frank Windham of Levi S. Peterson's *The Backslider* (1986), a novel lauded as "the funniest

Mormon novel so far” and the “standard for the contemporary Mormon novel” (England, “Beyond” 98, Givens 313). Richard J. Cummings, to be sure, argues that Frank is a “significant departure from the typical fictional Mormon protagonist” because he is neither “riddled with doubt [n]or has left the fold completely” (171). However, Frank shares with Howard Rockwood and other Faithful Realism protagonists a strained relationship with the authoritarian God and the cultural conservatism and strict moral code of the retrenched LDS Church. A young Mormon ranch hand in mid-century Southern Utah, he is a “fellow who belonged to the true Church and who believed in God but wished he didn’t,” leaving him to believe himself always “in big trouble” and on the precipice of hell (Peterson 7). Indeed, “penned up with his own perversity like a man caught in a corral with a hostile bull,” Frank sees himself as an eternal outlier, someone who will be “lucky to inherit even the Telestial Kingdom,” the spot in heaven reserved for murderers, adulterers, sorcerers, whoremongers, and liars (1, 7, see D&C 76:81-85, 98-106). For him, as it was for Howard, God is ever-vigilant of humanity’s sinning, particularly when it’s a Mormon doing the sinning. This gives Frank a highly bifurcated view of the human condition where one is either entirely unspotted from the sinful world or ensconced in wickedness. As Givens notes, Frank adheres to “a perverse parody of the Mormon calculus of salvation, living out the fallacy of spirituality as self-perfection” (314). Accordingly, he closes himself off from feeling at home in the Mormon community, and thinks of himself as cut off from the love of a God who is “down on hellraisers and backsliders” (Peterson 34). When Frank attends church, he feels “like a caged coyote at Big Rock Candy Mountain where summer tourists stopped and gawked” (136). More importantly, though, when he imagines God, he sees him behind the barrel of a rifle, “tracking him in his sights night and day,” waiting for Frank to violate any one of Mormonism’s many commandments (169). God, for him, is the kind of man who “didn’t mind

watching bad men hammer his own son to death on a cross just so when the time came he could skewer them on the pickets of hell” (170).

Significantly, while published in the 1980s, at the height of retrenchment, Frank’s story in the *The Backslider* takes place in the mid-1950s, shortly before retrenchment and the correlation reforms of the 1960s and 1970s took effect. Still, retrenchment attitudes abound throughout the novel, particularly in the Mormons with whom Frank associates with the most: Margaret, his mother, and Nathan, an old ranch hand who works with him. Both of these characters embrace proto-retrenchment views that flee assimilation through conservative living and overly-strict interpretations of revealed commandments. Nathan, for example, is intensely anti-intellectual and suspicious of his non-Mormon employer, Wesley Earle, who has a PhD in agronomy and, much to Nathan’s chagrin, entertains local professors and scientists who teach evolution. Nathan, in fact, is resentful of all non-Mormon encroachments into Utah. “[S]omeday,” he tells Frank, “God will bankrupt [Wesley]” to prepare the land for “Mormon buyers,” whom he believes to be the true stewards of the surrounding country (71). Moreover, like Frank, he believes in an authoritarian God who “hover[s] over this wild country with a notebook in his hand keeping tally on everything” (71). This attention to behavioral indicators of righteousness is mirrored in Frank’s mother, Margaret, an austere woman whose “holy madness,” as Jeremy Ravi Mumford notes, “teaches her sons that holiness means asceticism” and “expands the prohibitions of the Word of Wisdom to include all sensory pleasure, from sex to meat-eating—and flavorful food in general” (65). Most other Mormons in *The Backslider*, however, show similar resistance to assimilation, although they usually lack the extremism of Nathan and Margaret. Thanks to apostolic sermons and Relief Society lessons on modesty, for example, Frank’s sisters see mainstream fashions like bikinis and low necklines on dresses as

“conspiracies of Satan,” believing that the “New York fashion people” are infiltrating “the Salt Lake and Provo department stores” with clothing that must be altered before they can be decently worn” (138). Amid such dualistic views of the world, where outward appearances and behaviors mark individuals as either good or bad, it is little wonder that Frank feels himself ever on the outside of divine favor.

Falling Toward Heaven and *The Backslider* speak, to be sure, largely to white male experiences; however, additional works of Faithful Realism explore the experiences of others whose marginalization is not directly the result of doubt and disbelief. For instance, in later works of Faithful Realism, like Margaret Blair Young and Darius Aiden Gray’s *Standing on the Promises* trilogy (2000-2003), Arianne Cope’s *The Coming of Elijah* (2007), and Jonathan Langford’s *No Going Back* (2009), the experiences of racial minorities and gay Mormons find a home. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, these marginalized groups, while present in limited ways, took a backseat to the marginalization of white Mormon women. Alienated and restless Mormon women—from the oppressed polygamist wives in anti-Mormon novels to the repressed pioneer women and rebels of Lost Generation novels—had long been token elements of fiction about Mormons, of course, but Faithful Realist novels were the first to explore the effects of retrenchment, correlation, and the advances of second-wave feminism on Mormon women. Indeed, as Mauss observes, the Correlation reforms, with their centralization under the all-male Mormon priesthood, particularly “reinforced within an already patriarchal Mormonism the rigid gender roles usually associated with Protestant fundamentalism” (165). Women, for instance, who had long enjoyed significant autonomy and influence through auxiliaries like the Relief Society, Primary, and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association, lost significant ground when correlation granted priesthood quorums greater oversight of female auxiliaries (see

Bowman 195, Mauss 165, Prince 157, Sandberg 75, Wiley 22). Furthermore, additional ground—and internal solidarity—was lost during the Mormon Church’s highly-public campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, an institutional response to the activism of second-wave feminism that divided Mormon women and marginalized those within the community who favored the amendment’s reforms (Bowman 211-212, 234-236).

Among Faithful Realism’s most pointed critiques of late-century Mormon attitudes toward women and the marginalization of women are Linda Sillitoe’s *Sideways to the Sun* and John Bennion’s *Falling Toward Heaven*, both of which home in on this internal division and marginalization in their portrayal of Mormon women whose yearnings for self-actualization awakens them not only to their loss of power and privilege under correlation, but also to new awareness of the abuses of patriarchy and its seemingly arbitrary claim to power. In *Sideways to the Sun*, for example, protagonist Megan Stevens must restart her life after her husband, Richard, abandons her without notice. His absence sets her on a journey of liberation and self-actualization that uncovers the underbelly of retrenchment-era Mormon patriarchy, which it contrasts with insights from the contemporary women’s movement, and the network of women whose complicity with patriarchy sustains its privileged place in Megan’s Utah Mormon community. Similarly, in *Falling Toward Heaven*, Howard Rockwood’s mother, Emily, struggles to find her place in the patriarchal world of late-twentieth-century Mormonism, particularly after she learns that she has a gift for blessing women with her husband’s priesthood authority—an unorthodox practice once commonplace among Mormon women in the nineteenth century, but eliminated over the course of twentieth-century assimilation and retrenchment. In both cases, the novels argue that late twentieth-century Mormon women occupy a marginal place in a Mormonism increasingly defined by a centralized patriarchy with power to shape culture,

correlate attitudes, and limit the potential and usefulness of its female membership. As Allison tells Howard, “Your mother’s made to be a preacher, a healer, and she’s born into one of the only churches in the country that won’t let her do either” (208).

To some extent, the attention these novels pay to marginalized Mormon characters reengages the project Lost Generation writers began years earlier. However, Faithful Realist novels typically differ from these predecessors in their utopian belief that the institution can be reformed and improved. Often, this hope becomes articulated through tropes of “passing,” which enable the narratives to show marginalized characters moving from an unauthentic, repressed stage of Mormon expression—a kind of false performance of their “Mormonness”—to a stage the text presents as a more authentic state of Mormon being. “Passing,” of course, describes the socio-cultural phenomenon associated with “identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards and penalties” (Ginsberg 2). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “[t]he fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different ethnic, religious, or sexual group,” and studies of passing in real life generally note that individuals who engage in passing do so with an eye towards the social gains and freedoms it promises. In her work *Sexual Deceit: The Ethics of Passing* (2013), for example, Kelby Harrison notes that “[t]hose who choose to pass nearly always choose to do so [...] to escape corrupt and unjust restraints on personal freedom, or to access greater levels of opportunity or power in a social system that privileges certain sexual identities, gender expressions, religious or ethnic identities, or racial self-presentations” (1). Similarly, Elaine K. Ginsberg notes in her introduction to *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (1996) that “passing is usually motivated by a desire to shed the identity of an oppressed group to gain access to social and economic opportunities” as well as “by other kinds of perceived

rewards” (3). This has led many critics to see passing as an expression of individualism (Pfeiffer 2), a means for subverting oppressive social boundaries and either/or essentialist norms (Hostert 16, Schlossberg 3, Wald 6), an opportunity to “control the process of signification” (Schlossberg 3), and “a metaphor for identity formation” keyed in to the ways our “plurality of desire” promotes the “constant crossing” of identity boundaries towards the fluid expression of “identities of our own choosing” (Hostert 15-16, 34).¹² Of course, while positive interpretations of passing as a means for liberating subjectivities and subverting arbitrary social norms and restraints are refreshing, Harrison reminds that passing as a social phenomenon is “almost never a thoroughly pleasant subjective experience” for those who engage in it, nor “a desirable end in a utopic world that would allow all authentic expressions of identity, equal opportunity, and all individuals maximum freedom in pursuing a life that would allow them to flourish” (3).¹³

Certainly, in Faithful Realist novels, passing is neither pleasant nor desirable; it is a social necessity, a survival strategy marginal Mormons initially embrace within their community to avoid contention and possible rejection from those who better fit the correlation “mold.” Harrison, in her study, makes the important distinction between passive passing, or the passing that occurs when “one is commonly perceived as an identity they don’t consider themselves to be,” and active passing, or the “active assertion and a willful manipulation of self-styling or self-presentation” (49-50). Mormon fiction provides examples of both types of passing. In the novels of Nephi Anderson, for example, Mormon characters tended to be passive passers; indistinguishable from other white Protestants, they frequently surprised (even alarmed) unsuspecting family, friends, and acquaintances with their “true” Mormon identities. Passive passing, therefore, gave them an opportunity to self-define and articulate, typically after a melodramatic reveal, the markers that set them apart and made them distinctive. In post-1960s

Mormon fiction, on the other hand, the passing tends to be more active; Mormon characters marginalized by their doubts or non-conformity, put on what Samuel W. Taylor calls “smiling masks” and engage in what Richard Poll characterizes as “role-playing” as a way to retain membership in the community and cope with the strictures of retrenchment/correlation culture. For these characters, active passing as a fully retrenched and correlated Mormon serves initially as a deliberate survival strategy until the inauthenticity of the performance proves too soul-destroying that it threatens the character’s connection to the community. The passing trope, therefore, provides Faithful Realism with a starting point for characters to constitute “authentic” Mormon selves not through conformity to culturally-constructed norms, but by the exercise of free agency in choosing (and, if necessary, re-choosing) their own Mormon identity/ies. Further, it allows these texts to interrogate the constructedness of retrenchment norms and make a case for those whom these norms have marginalized, often by depicting movement from a passing position to a more satisfyingly “authentic” one.

Such movement serves almost as a formula for Faithful Realism novels. In both *The Backslider* and *Falling Toward Heaven*, the male protagonists experience crises of identity when their efforts at passing for dutiful Mormons provide neither social opportunity nor spiritual satisfaction. Frank Windham, for example, embraces riotous backsliding after his attempt to “live up to every jot and tittle of the commandments,” his part in a bargain with God for the affections of a woman, offers no satisfactory return (1). Even as a public hellraiser, though, Frank continues to engage in some passing, especially when he returns to his hometown to visit his mother and attend church. For instance, while he openly admits to breaking the Word of Wisdom and fighting, he lies about being a “fornicator” and, because he does not “have the guts to wave it on,” participates in the Sacrament, or weekly communion, despite knowing that doing

so “unworthily” is tantamount to “eating damnation” (136-137).¹⁴ Frank’s hellraising persona, to be sure, is itself a form of passing, a mask Frank uses to achieve a kind of liberating distance from God. Indeed, this mask cracks under the strain its own superficiality; Frank may have predilections toward hellraising and backsliding, but they are not predilections predicated on the absence of God. Frank’s narrow either/or view of God and righteousness prevents him from seeing how the two can co-exist, thus prodding him on to other, more harmful forms of passing. After his brother Jeremy castrates himself in his own reaction to cultural pressures to conform and pass, for example, Frank turns once again to an uber-strict adherence to his religion—this time not to avoid the whispers of his congregation, but the “cartridge locked into the firing chamber” of an angry God’s loaded rifle (169). He forsakes “vanities” like his truck, horse, Stetson, and good-tasting food to live the ascetic lifestyle of his mother. Furthermore, he abstains from lovemaking with his wife and nightly restrains himself with “a little contraption he had made from two buckskin gloves [...] to keep him from masturbating in his sleep” (392). Such a fundamentalist strain of this new way of passing leads him to seek escape through self-mutilation and the possibility of suicide by castration, a fate he avoids only after Jesus appears to him in the form of a cigarette smoking cowboy who guides him toward a path of greater personal authenticity. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Frank is only happy because he recognizes that his real Mormonness derives not from his adherence to strict lifestyle guidelines, but from his knowledge that “Jesus is kind” (431).

Howard Rockwood follows a similar trajectory in *Falling Toward Heaven*, although without Frank’s partiality for the bizarre and grotesque. When the novel opens, Howard is a missionary in Houston who is hiding his doubts about Mormonism, determined to “muddle through to the end” of his mission rather than “break his mother’s heart” (4). After falling in love

with Allison, an atheist computer programmer, he grows restless of “liv[ing] the form” of a believer and writes her a letter admitting that he “no longer know[s] to be true” what he has “believed all [his] life” (55, 111). The admission sets Howard on a kind of quest for his “true self” that forces him to make a decision between two fears—telling his family and friends that “he had lost his faith” or “liv[ing] a lie, never sharing his doubt with anyone he loved” (71). While neither prospect seems appealing or advantageous to Howard, he eventually makes his choice by abandoning his mission and an orthodox approach to Mormonism for Allison and an approach to faith where he can have both Mormonism and Allison without the dogmatism of the cruel God he “feared as a child.” Indeed, as he begins to move in this direction, he feels “himself moving toward his true self before God” (110-111). Refusing to pass as orthodox, however, does not resolve Howard’s identity problems; ultimately, he removes himself from the retrenchment culture of Mormon Utah and relocates with Allison in Alaska where he hopes to “re-create himself in an image closer to his nature than what others had imagined for him” (149). Cutting himself off from the land of his youth, particularly the ranching lifestyle he has come to associate with masculinity and selfhood, temporarily dislodges him, throwing him into a sort of housewife role that Allison compares to “some asinine scene from *Leave it to Beaver*” (158). Howard finally achieves a sense of peace with his identity, however, by a reimagining of the two things that had necessitated his earlier passing: his understanding of God and the Church. In both cases, it requires him to throw off his correlated notions of God as a “modern businessman and Old Testament patriarch” and church as “a room of answers” for an understanding where church becomes “a pathway to questions” and the authoritarian God is merely a product of his flaws and those of his Utah Mormon culture (184, 192). This awareness frees him to imagine a God “more like [his] mother’s father, a wise and kind man” (192), so that by the end of the novel, he is

reconciled with God and Mormonism; like Frank, he is “happier, more stable,” after giving “up trying to be an unbeliever.” He recognizes that the Mormon religion is “in his blood” (273).¹⁵

Passing is not as significant a trope in *Sideways to the Sun* as it is in *Falling Toward Heaven* and *The Backslider*. Even so, the same kind of unequal gender/power dynamics in the Mormon landscape of *Falling Toward Heaven* is present in the earlier novel, which foregrounds particularly how correlated Mormonism has inscribed this inequality into the ritual and material culture that constitutes contemporary Mormon life, thus creating circumstances where women affirm unthinkingly the inequality in the daily orthodox practice of their religion. Aside from church programs and publications that emphasize separate spheres ideologies and privilege patriarchy and priesthood, *Sideways to the Sun* takes particular aim at the Mormon temple garment, the underclothing Mormons receive and wear after participating in sacred temple ceremonies. The novel equates the garment with Mormon patriarchy and characterizes it as a kind of security blanket that keeps Mormons insulated from the outside world. Megan, the novel’s protagonist, initially sees the garment in this light, using it as a protective proxy for her husband, who has disappeared. Accordingly, when she feels “[t]he warmth of her garments under her nightgown,” she feels comforted knowing that they are “the garments of the priesthood” and sleeping in them is “almost like sleeping in Richard’s embrace” (26). The garment also ties her to the other women of her congregation, for whom the underclothing operates as much as an outward sign of their devotion to their church and its male leadership as their secure place in the Mormon community. After Megan’s husband fails to return, however, Megan begins to see the garment as an oppressive “symbol of all that had betrayed her, shut her out” (214). She finds herself, because of her ambiguous status as an abandoned woman, increasingly “put down” by women who appear “just like [her], really, right down to the garment line [they] can all see under

[their] clothes.” This rejection leads Megan to see the garment as an ironic symbol of her place in the Mormon community; while she wears it, making her seemingly “sisters to the skin” with the other women of her congregation, she is nevertheless “shun[ed...] like a leper” for having lost her status among what one divorced character in the novel describes as “the golden circle of married women in [the] ward” (36, 134). Aware of her increasingly marginal place in her Mormon community, she comes to understand the garment as “eggshell armor,” a sign that has lost its meaning and become more like a mask than a shield (134-135). When she finally stops wearing it, throwing it away in a trashcan in a public swimming pool changing room where other women had just finished putting their garments on, Megan enacts her refusal to pass as a member of the “golden circle” now that she sees herself apart from it. For Eugene England, this decision becomes a “symbol of complete casting off of her old, delusory sense of identity based only in relationship—as daughter, sister, wife, mother.” It is “not merely an angry lashing out at the Church and the gospel, but a radical rejection [...] of priesthood as authority and power rather than long-suffering love” (104). It marks a turning point in Megan’s awakening to a new life where outward displays of devotion and community belonging no longer order her life. While she seems “less shielded, less hidden” without the garment, her separation from it make her “feel more herself” and have a tighter “connection to life” (142). Like Frank and Howard, she remains a Mormon, yet enacts her Mormonness in such a way that forces readers to reconsider the conformist model of Mormon identity and imagine faithful stances that embrace independence and identities that no longer rely on the politically advantageous—but ultimately soul-stifling—strategy of passing.

V.

Another way Faithful Realism responded to retrenchment and correlation was by recovering a sense of the charismatic spirituality and cosmological speculation that had defined Mormon liturgical practice and doctrinal development throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, prior to the twentieth century, much of how Mormons conducted their meetings, learned and performed rituals, and instructed one another in church doctrines was the product of oral tradition. At the turn of the century, however, the post-utopian challenge of assimilation led top Church leaders to enact a number of policies that reformed and formalized liturgical practices (Stapley 3-4). Again, under these reforms, Mormon priesthood authority became “more formally associated [...] with ecclesial bureaucratic structure,” thus paving the way for Harold B. Lee’s subsequent correlation reforms, which would streamline this structure and extend the authority of priesthood quorums further than they had previously enjoyed (75-76). Mormon liturgy, consequently, received more official oversight as the bureaucracy sought to rein in “the charismatic and dramatic presence of the supernatural,” which had long played a major role in Mormon religious services throughout the nineteenth century, and regulate it through proper priesthood channels (Bowman 173). Indeed, as Bowman suggests, this was done with an eye toward mainstream respectability at a time when charismatic practices once common in Mormon worship—glossolalia and its interpretation, weeping, prophesying, and the laying on of hands—were becoming the mainstay of American Pentecostalism, an interracial movement that middle-class Americans, including upwardly-mobile Mormons, “found disreputable, lower-class, and rude.” Further, the “emotional, unpredictable, and unreliable nature” of these charismatic practices was out of step with the rational, Progressive-Era theology that developed from the pens of early twentieth-century theologians like B. H. Roberts and John A. Widtsoe, “for whom

true religious experience enlightened the mind and character and could be explained rationally” (173-174).

With the rise of correlation in the mid-twentieth century, the spirit of these early reforms took root, unequivocally transitioning Mormon practice from a liturgy of oral traditions and charismatic spiritual expressions to one of guidelines and policies written and carried out by a centralized priesthood bureaucracy. While retrenchment sought a partial retreat from the assimilationist aspects of these reforms, specifically in its renewed emphasis on gifts of the spirit and the divine authority of prophets, it did not usher in a renaissance of the charismatic forms of spiritual expression so prevalent in the nineteenth century. Indeed, while retrenchment distanced itself from the Church’s Progressive-Era flirtation with science and reason, it continued to reinforce structural reforms and efforts to clarify Church doctrines and standardize teachings, particularly after the emergence of correlation in the 1960s. Indeed, with correlation came the publication of Church-wide materials that routinized, systematized, and standardized Church administration and instruction on a Church-wide scale (Bowman 197). While leaders and teachers were still expected to “follow the spirit” in carrying out their duties, the “charismatic element” of their performance became “highly routinized and channeled by correlation” (Mauss 164). More often than not, outlines from carefully reviewed handbooks and lesson manuals, rather than individualized spiritual prompting, determined what was practiced, performed, experienced, and taught among Mormons.

This highly-regulated Mormonism informs the setting of most Faithful Realist novels. In both *Sideways to the Sun* and *Falling Toward Heaven*, the failure of correlated church culture to speak to certain human experiences—such as doubt and divorce—results in the spiritual stagnation and disillusionment of key characters. Kristin, a divorced friend of Megan in

Sideways to the Sun, groans during a Primary program, a correlated annual production performed by children in Mormon congregations, the theme of which “linked freedom in America with the sanctity of the traditional family.” The program gives Kristin a headache because its image of “a father, a mother, and children all living happily in tidy cottages” is far-removed from and indirectly critical of her experience as a divorced Mormon and a single mother (72-73).

Moreover, when Megan shares with Kristin her unsuccessful experience attempting to hold Family Home Evening, one of correlation’s flagship programs, without her husband, Kristin recommends that she “forget the lesson manual for a while” since its “talk about fathers and family and priesthood” does not resonate with her home situation (73). Howard Rockwood, likewise, seeks a similar distance from rote religion in *Falling Toward Heaven*. Aside from his distaste for a “stern” patriarchal God “focused on obedience to rules,” and his tendency not to “[p]reach from the lessons,” Howard resists the notion “that the universe [is] simple and unitary”—which is something he has heard “[a]ll his life.” Indeed, Howard remains in a spiritual malaise until he embraces a worldview where “[o]pposites [are] true” and “paradoxes [are] as commonplace as stars” (110). While doing so forces him to reject the kinds of simple explanations to complex questions that came to characterize Mormon doctrinal instruction under correlation, it proves to be the saving grace of his faith.

Faithful Realist novels incorporate similar engagements with unorthodox approaches to Mormonism and charismatic spirituality to combat spiritual stagnation under retrenchment culture and correlation policies. As noted above, Emily Rockwood in *Falling Towards Heaven* is “filled with warmth” and “a clear strong feeling” when she effectively blesses women with her husband’s priesthood, an act similar to sanctioned healing rituals performed by Mormon women throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but increasingly discouraged since

mid-century (289, see Stapley, Bowman 175). Additionally, Howard Rockwood and Megan Stevens also find significant spiritual uplift and support by connecting with Heavenly Mother, a “shadowy and elusive” figure in Mormon theology who first emerged amid nineteenth-century Mormonism’s culture of “creative speculation,” yet became increasingly controversial in the late twentieth century (Wilcox 78-79, 85-87; Givens 178). Indeed, at the time *Sideways to the Sun* and *Falling Toward Heaven* were published, the idea of Mother in Heaven had become something of a Mormon taboo after Mormon feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, having appropriated her as a “tool for empowerment,” met with strong resistance—including, in some cases, excommunication—from Church leaders who cautioned members against worshipping her (Wilcox 85-87).¹⁶ In both novels, however, Heavenly Mother is an overwhelmingly positive presence that brings compassion and strength to characters. Megan Stevens, for example, has a fortifying charismatic experience with a divine presence on her way to confront a local polygamist who has been preying on her teenage daughter:

For another minute or two, she listened to the night and found within it the sense of a force quite different than the one she’d been trained to tug down from heaven. This force seeped up from the darkened earth like life itself and stirred quietly in the breeze, encompassing, enfolding, healing, and settling to rights, She’d felt it before in unsolicited moments of blessing. (194)

While a direct reference to Heavenly Mother is noticeably absent from this passage, the “sense of a force” Megan feels contrasts with “the one she’s been trained to tug down from heaven,” a likely allusion to the masculine presence of the patriarchal Mormon God. The association of the “force” with “the darkened earth”—typically a feminine symbol—as well as with imagery of

nurturing and healing suggest something of a feminine divine presence. That thoughts of Megan's own mother preface her spiritual experience further supports this reading.

More direct, however, are Howard's engagements with Heavenly Mother. Throughout the novel, he prays to and calls upon his "Grandmother God," rather than Heavenly Father, for direction. Howard's Grandmother God, however, is less the nurturing earth-spirit of *Sideways to the Sun* than a weary, loving nag. After Howard first meets Allison, for example, and "decide[s] that somehow he would see her again, the raspy voice of Grandmother God whispers in his ear, "Foolish, unwary child" (17). Howard's Grandmother God can be compassionate like Megan's Heavenly Mother, though. When he abandons his mission for a sexual relationship with Allison, he envisions a domestic scene in heaven that casts the Grandmother God as a moderate voice in the Godhead:

He imagined God stomping back and forth, as if just above in the attic. "The young fool's squandered his chances," he said, "polluted his temple."

Jesus held his hand out in a calming motion. "But, Father." The Holy Ghost fluttered around the room.

Grandmother God—who reminded Howard of Grace Montoya, arms thin as bones, face translucent, hair like a burning halo—leaned back on a dusty couch, "Settle down, all of you," she said. "Give him space to think."
[...]

"Grandmother God," he prayed, "I'm in a bad way."

"You are a foolish mouse," she said. "But you cooked your own *frijoles*. Now eat them." (99-100)

In this scene, Heavenly Mother is again imagined as a wise, weary presence with a barbed tongue; yet, Howard's prayer to her, rather than to God or Jesus, identifies her here and throughout the rest of the novel as Howard's primary link to divinity, his access point to faith and spirituality. God, to be sure, eventually finds a place in Howard's faith, but by then he is frequently coupled with Heavenly Mother. For instance, after Allison delivers a stillborn baby, he tells her "[t]he gods, mother and father, knew [the baby would die], but we didn't. They were helping me get ready for the sorrow. Telling me they loved me before the sorrow set in" (310). Even with the masculine (and secondary?) presence of the father in Howard's statement, his contact with Heavenly Mother, like Megan's in *Sideways to the Sun*, constitutes real, empowering spiritual experiences that lift—despite being taboo and unorthodox—Mormon characters out of the dissatisfaction of routine religious life.

Perhaps the best known instance of Faithful Realism's attempt to recover a sense of the Mormon charismatic, however, is found in *The Backslider*. In possibly the most notorious and beloved scene in contemporary Mormon literature, Jesus appears to Frank at a meetinghouse urinal after Frank has just finished baptizing Marianne, his wife, into the Mormon Church. Riding "a shiny roan" and wearing "boots, ancient chaps, a denim shirt, [and] a creased, sweat-stained Stetson," the Cowboy Jesus listens kindly to Frank's problems and reasons for hating God. Then, smoking a self-rolled cigarette, Jesus matter-of-factly questions Frank's ascetic lifestyle and recent self-castigation:

"Why can't you believe my blood was enough? Jesus said. "Why do you have to shed yours too?"

"I don't know."

[...]

“Furthermore, that Marianne is one hell of a good woman. Why don’t you settle down and enjoy her like a husband would who has some good sense?”

“Do you think I ought to?”

“Yeah, you ought to.”

Jesus crushed his cigarette on the sole of his boot. He pulled his leg down off the saddlehorn and said, “I’ve got to ride. It was good to chat with you.”

“Yes, sir, thank you, sir.”

Jesus pulled on buckskin gloves and took up the reins. “If you want to eat that damned vegetable diet of your mother’s all your life, don’t blame me for it. Myself, I go for food that tastes good.”

“Yes, sir, I’ll remember that.”

[...]

Jesus pulled his horse around and struck him lightly in the ribs with his spurs. Looking back, he said, “And work on that crap about hating God. See if you can’t get over it.” (424)

Eugene England praises this scene in the novel as “one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies [...] in modern fiction (101), yet Richard Cracroft, responding to England, notes that while “*The Backslider* is true and faithful to a Sophic and secular vision of literature” and “doubtlessly speaks profoundly and in relief-rendering tones to readers who are grappling with the guilt imposed on them by LDS-Christian theology,” its “profanation of Christ” and portrait of “the grotesque God of Frank’s strange, quasi-Calvinistic-but decidedly not LDS-theology,” along with its “shocking, disconcerting, and dissonant language,” make it an “unauthentic and off-putting” depiction of Mormonism (55). Such a response is indicative of correlation policies that

have shaped the view of Christ in the Latter-day Saint imagination in the late-twentieth century. As Neal Chandler notes, *The Backslider*'s "heavenly vision emergent from the rushing waters of a urinal" is offensive to Mormons who "like [their] Jesuses the old fashioned way: white-robed, sandal-clad, and Sandinavian" rather than as "a deity who curses and breaks the Word of Wisdom" (64).¹⁷ However, as Aaron Sanders notes, the scene exposes "Frank's shame and guilt [...] as gratuitous spiritual masochism" and affirms "the basic tenet of Christianity: Christ offered up his own life to atone for the sins of others" (104). Moreover, the scene reinforces what Richard J. Cummings identifies as the novel's argument for "a balanced way of life" that "avoid[s] the all-too-human extremes of debauchery and asceticism" and "celebrate[s] our humanness while pursuing moral and spiritual betterment" (171). Indeed, like Megan's and Howard's Heavenly Mother theophanies, Frank's vision of the Cowboy Jesus dislocates spirituality from the correlated channels of order and orthodoxy for an uncorrelated experience that redefines and opens up Mormon understandings of access to the divine. As Givens notes, "[t]he dramatic irony of Frank's misguided guilt is emphatically predicated on the powerful resonance of a vision, not a moral conduct, that needs reconstituting" (315). What Frank's unorthodox vision in *The Backslider* does is reconstitute that vision, redefining faith not as a set of superficial rules and behavioral guidelines, which clearly matter little to the Cowboy Jesus, but a deeper belief in a savior who can heal with his blood.¹⁸

VI.

Finally, Faithful Realism can be understood as a response to retrenchment's efforts to reaffirm and strengthen the myriad boundaries between the Mormon Zion and the American Babylon. As Mauss notes, Mormon particularism, as opposed to ecumenism or assimilation, "more than doubled" under retrenchment reforms, as evidenced in an increase in twentieth-

century rhetoric insisting on the LDS Church's status as "the one true church or as the kingdom of God" in the church's general conferences (87). In their study of modern developments in Mormonism (1984), Gordon and Gary Shepherd also note an absence of ecumenism in retrenchment-era Mormonism, observing that Mormon leaders from this era, while "curtail[ing] public expression of sectarian antipathies," largely "show[ed] virtually no interest in ecumenism" aside from efforts that could "be viewed by Mormons either as an opportunity for them to accomplish some missionary work or to generate favorable publicity for the church" (198). Furthermore, the Shepherds' research finds that twentieth-century rhetoric in general conference about the "moral decay" of the world, as well as the need for "overcoming" the world, "coming out" from the world, and opposing the "wickedness" of the world also increased dramatically under retrenchment (Shepherd 258). Coupled with grass-roots tendencies, alluded to above, of Mormons "adopt[ing] especially austere religious styles, fleeing from ambiguity to the seeming safety of the most conservative extremes in doctrine, gender roles, health practices, and other observances, in order to claim identities as 'real Mormons,'" these rhetorical shifts in the second half of the twentieth century indicate that Mormonism became more insular and exclusive than earlier in the century (Mauss 167). This tendency, in turn, contributed to tensions between Mormons and non-Mormons in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As a December 2001 poll in the *Salt Lake Tribune* pointed out, 86% of non-Mormons and 63% of Mormons in Utah recognized "a social, political and cultural divide" between Mormons and non-Mormons in the state. Among other things, the poll also revealed that "Mormons and non-Mormons [tended] to socialize with their own" and that members from both groups felt that they had "experienced discrimination or uneasiness in Utah based on their religious views" ("3-in-5 Utahns"). More recently, in 2010, Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell noted in their book

American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us that this divide continues and extends to wherever Mormons are found. According to their study, Mormons cohere so tightly because their “shared history, legacy of persecution, mass migration, and geographic concentration” has made them behave as an ethnicity “based on belief, not blood” (504). Consequently, they further reasoned, “Mormons stick together: They marry each other, live by each other, and associate with one another,” which can be offsetting to outsiders (525-26).

Such borders and separations, to be sure, have long been an important part of Mormon identity—and certainly a central concern of Mormon fiction since Nephi Anderson and Susa Young Gates. In these early novels—with the exception, perhaps, of Anderson’s *Dorian* (1921)—cultural-community borders were something to be constituted and reinforced as much as crossed—often so long as the crossing facilitated greater outsider understanding of the Mormon people. In *Faithful Realism*, such border crossings continue to be important, although the emphasis is less on outsider understanding of Mormonism than on greater Mormon understanding and acceptance of outsiders. Indeed, the border crossings of late-century Mormon literature often seek to extend the borders of Mormon empathy for those who have historically been their antagonists both in literature and in real life. Hence, both *The Backslider* and *Falling Toward Heaven* center on relationships that transcend faith and ideology. A tradition reminiscent of reconciliatory post-Civil War fiction that coupled Northern men with Southern women, the coupling of believer with non-believer, while unthinkable in Nephi Anderson’s day, and controversial in a retrenchment that idealizes temple marriage between two faithful Mormons, the unions suggest a bridging of cultures towards a future of greater intercultural understandings and mutual respect. Significantly, in *Falling Toward Heaven*, which weds Mormon Howard with Atheist Allison, the two work to overcome their individual prejudices against the other’s world

view, adapting their own world views in the process. When Allison becomes pregnant, they decide to “teach [their daughter] both perspectives,” making her culturally “bilingual,” even though both recognize that doing so fairly would involve “invent[ing] a non-polarized way of talking,” which, for Allison, seems “[n]early impossible.” The how-to of their agreement is never settled beyond expressions of trust; however, both agree that what they want to “[r]aise a child in a moral and ethical house” (252-253).

The Backslider is less radical in its portrait of intercultural border crossings because its interfaith marriage between Mormon Frank and Lutheran Marianne ends when Marianne is baptized a Mormon and they become united in faith. Even so, at Marianne’s baptism, *The Backslider* offers an image of two faith traditions coming together in celebration. Indeed, during Frank’s vision at the urinal, the Cowboy Jesus counsels him to “[d]o something to make your poor mother-in-law feel better” since Marianne’s “getting baptized a Mormon has been tough on her.” Frank follows through with his promise with a loving exchange that expresses his love for Clara, his mother-in-law, and his assurance that Marianne will “still be a good Christian” after her Mormon baptism (424-425). Moreover, at the after-baptism reception, an elderly woman asks Marianne’s father, John Wesley Earle, if he is “taking the missionary lessons too,” to which Wesley jokes, “No, ma’am [...] My wife and I consider ourselves sufficiently papered Christians already. Our home is a feeding lot or a breeding farm, if you will, for fine Christian children, which we produce for a variety of churches” (426). Wesley is teasing the woman, of course, but the good-natured ribbing at a gathering of Mormons and Lutherans—from a character named for the founder of Methodism, no less—offers a utopian picture in the spirit of border-crossing ecumenism and intercultural exchange. Indeed, one way Faithful Realist novels promote border crossings is by depicting utopian enclaves, like the interfaith baptism celebration, that

identify existing boundaries or points of exclusion and imagine openings where cultural exchange can happen and new visions and boundaries can be formed.

Importantly, though, while utopian enclaves that seek to cross boundaries between Mormons and non-Mormons exist throughout Faithful Realist novels, and perform crucial culture work toward mending the social divides that still exist between Mormons and their neighbors (see Hales “A Broader Geography”), these novels are often more interested in constructing enclaves that cross the internal boundaries that set Mormons against each other. As Mauss and others have suggested, retrenchment sought to cultivate new “cultural tension” between Mormonism and mainstream society in order to recover the “special identity” that had set Mormons apart in the nineteenth century (x). This chapter suggests, however, that Faithful Realism, while invested, like much of Mormon literature, in the idea of a distinctive Mormon identity, sought to do so without antagonizing outsider communities the way Mormon writers of previous generations had (see Chapter Two). Accordingly, the border conflicts in Faithful Realism are not often between insiders and outsiders, but insiders and insiders—those who wish to tighten the borders and those who wish to break them open.

Utopian enclaves that seek to remedy internal cultural tensions appear in a variety of forms as well. For instance, in *The Backslider*, after Frank’s brother Jeremy assumes a kind of transgendered identity after slicing off his genitals during a deer hunt, Frank announces in priesthood meeting that “his brother doesn’t like to be called Jeremy anymore,” but instead answers only to the name “Alice.” In a church that privileges heteronormativity and conceptualizes gender as something intrinsic and eternal, a likely response to Frank’s announcement would be suspicion and rebuke. However, despite some snickering from adolescent deacons, Alice receives a warm, protective welcome from the bishop:

“There’s nothing in scripture that says a man can’t be called by the name he wants to be called by. Come Judgment Day we’re going to see Sister Alice standing on the right hand of the Savior. The Lord put him among us for a reason and we better not let the Lord down. Brethren, keep an eye on your kids and if you see them making fun of Sister Alice, larrup the daylights out of them.” (290)

Eugene England reads this scene as evidence of “the benign side of the Mormon ethos, a strong sense of communal responsibility to suffer together and ease each other” (99). In contrast to the novel’s other treatment of non-polygamous, non-normative sexuality, however, in which a man has himself ritualistically killed by a polygamy sect for going to Salt Lake City “to be with men,” the Mormon congregation’s acceptance of Alice comes across as more than an instance of Mormon benignity. Indeed, Alice’s rejection of a masculine identity, while intertwined with a complex web of theological and cultural forces, and understood by the community as symptomatic of mental disorder, is more a radical attempt to reconcile herself to Mormon gender norms—a kind of extreme turn from internal pressures to pass for what one is not. By accepting this turn, rather than punishing it, Alice’s bishop creates a safe place for her, queering Zion in a way that later novels, like Jonathan Langford’s *No Going Back* and Moriah Jovan’s *Magdalene*, attempt to do more explicitly (365).¹⁹

Sideways to the Sun provides additional examples. A Relief Society opening social becomes a utopian enclave, for instance, when six women, who “look different” from other women at the gathering, perform readings from “the letters and journals of women in the early history of the Church.” Telling stories of the heroism of pioneer women, the struggles of polygamy, and the trials of marriage and motherhood, the readers unfold a long history of Mormon women empowerment that is “barely mentioned at church,” leaving Kristin, the

divorced Mormon, “feel[ing] richer and poorer at the same time” (121-123). Similarly, in *Falling Toward Heaven*, an enclave emerges in a reading group of Mormon women taking women’s studies classes together. They “read and talk, read and talk,” expressing their “pet peeves” about “the power structure of the church” and “patriarchal attitudes” toward women’s bodies, land, and work (207). Both instances provide plausible internal space where faithful women—we learn, after all, that the “radical Salt Lake and Provo women” performing readings of pioneer women are “Temple-goers, every one of them”—can find a voice, recover history, and fortify themselves with knowledge that unsettles existing conservative paradigms (202). Indeed, the characters most affected by these utopian enclaves, Kristin and Emily, find themselves more empowered through their contact with them. For instance, while Emily claims that “[t]he earth’s never seen a less political animal” than she, her involvement with this reading group awakens her to “the injustice of [her] punishment” and gives her resolve not “to leave this life with what [she has] to say unsaid, with the blessings dammed up that could flow through [her]” (208). In both instances, enclaves within the Mormon community open up to reveal alternatives to status quo conditions for Mormon women. Like the queer Zion glimpsed in *The Backslider*, where non-normative individuals find sanctuary from ridicule and abuse, these intellectual communities offer ways for women to revise notions of gender roles and forge new powerful identities and new boundaries within their faith tradition.

VII.

Faithful Realism peaked in the 1990s as a series of last-ditch retrenchment efforts to curb the promethean reach of Mormon intellectuals and artists signaled the beginning of the end of Mormonism’s late twentieth-century culture wars. Armand Mauss, writing retrospectively nearly twenty years after his 1994 study of retrenchment, notes that a “series of changes in Church

policy,” beginning with LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley in the late 1990s, have had “the cumulative effect of pulling the pendulum of ecclesiastical culture back somewhat from the retrenchment mode and toward assimilation,” resulting in “a different ‘feel’” in the Church (4). Among the policy changes Mauss notes are an “official tendency to soft-pedal” differences between Mormonism and mainstream Christianity, a relaxing of rhetoric on gender roles and homosexuality, and an easing of certain restrictions on female participation in worship services and councils (6, 8, 11, 13). Furthermore, he notes that “electronic social media, especially the blogosphere,” have “done [...] much to increase the voice and visibility of Mormon women,” particularly Mormon feminists, who have been able “to explore the intersection between their feminist yearnings and the roles expected of them in the teachings and policies of the Church” without the kinds of repercussions Mormon feminists endured a generation earlier (11-12). The same is also true for Mormon intellectuals, whose new-found freedom of inquiry, according to Mauss, marks “the most conspicuous indication of a retreat from retrenchment.” Indeed, Mauss reports that the “excommunications and other forms of discipline exercised against intellectuals during the 1980s and early 1990s seem to have dwindled or even stopped altogether, and a new official openness has become apparent toward unsponsored scholarship in general and toward controversial issues in particular” (15). In such a climate, works like *Sideways to the Sun* and *Falling Toward Heaven* are beginning to lose potency and resonance among young twenty-first century Mormons whose view of Mormonism have been informed by very different cultural influences than those that informed these novels. That Faithful Realism in the form of Margaret Blair Young and Darius Aidan Gray’s *Standing on the Promises* series was published by Church-owned Deseret Book also suggests that what was started as a counterculture response to

conservative trends has now become something increasingly more mainstream (see Mauss 15-16).

Still, despite these changes, retrenchment attitudes remains heavily embedded in Mormon culture, and until Mormonism come to terms with that portion of its history, even Faithful Realist novels like *Sideways to the Sun* and *Falling Toward Heaven* will find resonance with Mormon readers dealing with retrenchment's legacy, particularly in the way their failure to imagine greater utopian enclaves can serve as a springboard for the new generation of Mormon writers' post-utopian imagination. Moreover, as Mormonism's recent public battles over issues like same-sex marriage and female ordination suggest, the leadership in Salt Lake City is still carefully choosing the direction and pace of Mormon assimilation. As the following chapters will show, the Mormon novel continues to address and engage the post-utopian challenge of assimilation as national and global trends force Mormons to scramble for new ways to seek mainstream acceptability while maintaining a distinctive identity. While some of Faithful Realism's concerns are becoming increasingly antiquated due to new media and evolving attitudes about gender and learning, its desire to cross internal and external borders and envision a Zion of many hearts and many minds continues to be central to many Mormon novels. Indeed, as the following chapters look at how Mormon novels at the turn of the twenty-first century address intersections of assimilation, history, and globalization, what becomes apparent is that the Mormon novel remains a mediating space for Mormonism's ongoing struggle with the broader world.

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¹ Taylor came by his resistance to assimilation and "positive-thinking" honestly. His grandfather, John Taylor (1808-1887), was a prominent Mormon apostle who had long-resisted American efforts to interfere with and regulate Mormon practices. When James Buchanan sent an army against the Mormons in 1857, Taylor gave a fiery sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle that denounced the aggression and proclaimed his intention to resist it to the fullest measure:

We will not submit to such a state of things forever. If you, our enemies, are determined to invade our rights, trample upon our liberties, snatch from us the rich boon we have inherited from our

fathers, to make us bow in vile subservience to your will, we will resist you: we will not submit to it. We will say, Stand back and give us our rights. We will act the part of freemen, and we say it shall be, "The kingdom of God or nothing." (21)

Twenty-three years later, John Taylor succeeded Brigham Young to become the third president of the Church, remaining true to the mantra "The kingdom of God or nothing" in the face of U.S. anti-polygamy legislation. When he died in 1887, he was defiantly hunkered down in a Kaysville, Utah home evading federal marshals and certain arrest. His son, John W. Taylor, likewise continued the legacy of defiance. Two years before Samuel W. Taylor was born, John W. Taylor resigned from the Quorum of the Twelve after his refusal to abandon polygamy became a source of embarrassment for Mormon leaders during the Reed Smoot hearings. His ongoing non-conformity further led to his subsequent excommunication in 1911, a highly-public sacrifice on the altar of Mormon assimilation. With such a legacy, it is indeed unsurprising that Taylor so resented the "positive-thinkers" who promoted an image of the "modern, homogenized Mormon," created in the image of their "new-found friends" in mainstream America. As Taylor's fellow Mormon novelist Levi S. Peterson once opined, "the trauma of [Taylor's] father's expulsion from the Quorum of the Twelve," likely accounts for why the novelist "looked upon his people from a certain removal" in his writing (11). It was a body of work forged by a long history of resistance to heavy-handed institutional interventions both outside and inside the Church.

² Furthermore, many Mormons at this time aligned themselves with other conservative churches in their opposition to communism, big government, and liberal activism. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, Mormons worked with other conservative groups to successfully kill the Equal Rights Amendment (208-212).

³ Edward Geary, a professor of English at Brigham Young University, first referred to these writers as a "Lost Generation" in his 1977 essay "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s," which was published in *BYU Studies* and later republished in *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature* (1997). In the essay, Geary suggests a partial list of Lost Generation novelists as follows: Paul Bailey, Vardis Fisher, Lorene Pearson, Richard Scowcroft, Virginia Sorensen, Samuel W. Taylor, Maurine Whipple, and Jean Woodman. According to Geary, their work is characterized by a "sense of 'cultural breakdown'" stemming from the "ending of an era of Mormon isolation and self-sufficiency" and the "stagnation and decline of rural Mormondom" (25). It also seeks to "come to terms" with the writer's "Mormon heritage," often through a "central conflict [...] between individualism and authority" (26). In the midst of this conflict is generally a liminal figure—either a skeptic or a rebel—who is "something of an individualist yet involved with church and community, caught between his or her instinct for freedom and the demands of loyalty and obedience." Furthermore, this liminal figure comes in contact with other figures typical of the genre—a faithful man whose commitment to the community borders on "narrow-mindedness," a "sensitive and perceptive" child that eventually fulfills the liminal figure's desire for "creative and individualistic" living, and a "liberating gentile [...] of culture and charm who opens up a vision of freedom and fulfillment beyond the narrow provincial boundaries of the valley"—to present a "dead-end interpretation of Mormon history" that suggests that the heroes of the pioneer era have been "replaced by men of smaller souls and narrower vision" (27-29).

Why these Mormon writers turned particularly to historical fiction is a question Dan Moos partially seeks to answer in his chapter on them in his *Outside America: Race, Ethnicity, and the Role of the American West in National Belonging* (2005). For him, the works of these writers suggest that they "sought to embrace secular American ideals while holding fast to their Mormon identi[t]y" by writing historical novels that "redefine[d] Mormonism as a less peculiar Americanism" by directly and critically addressing "the heritages of a threatening and problematic Mormon past" (115). Historical fiction, in a sense, allowed these writers to present nineteenth-century Mormons as "*ur*-pioneers" in the tradition of American westward expansion, demystifying Mormonism and its peculiar practices (especially polygamy) for non-Mormon readers in a way that allowed them to see common threads between American and Mormon history. Moos calls this strategy for the "erasure" of difference "exorcism through unveiling." Its purpose, according to him, was to disclose the details of polygamous life in order to contain them, showing polygamy's negative consequences, and establishing it "as a historical and cultural blip, not to be ignored, but to be contextualized and understood as no longer necessarily informing the future" (117-118). Moos also draws similar conclusions about these novelists' treatment of the 1890 Woodruff Manifesto as an "end of Mormon history," or a beginning of Mormonism's "Americanization" (136-137).

⁴ Widsot's objection to these writers' use of realism stems perhaps from literary realism's objectivist approach to storytelling—its tendency only to show, as William Dean Howells put it in 1889, "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material" (966). Based on his criticism of Whipple's and Sorensen's works, that is, Widsot seems to desire a "treatment" of Mormon history and historical figures that privileges beauty, strength, and extraordinariness rather than "truthful" depictions of everyday occurrences and flawed humanity. Indeed, following

Moos's reading of these writers (see endnote 3), such an idealized approach would be antithetical to their assimilationist aims, which could be better accomplished through a realist aesthetic that could "unveil" and contextualize the "truth" of Mormon life, including polygamy, without an apparent pro-Mormon (or anti-Mormon) agenda. At the same time, one could argue that Widdsoe's desire for a more flattering picture of Mormonism was assimilationist in its own right—a desire, that is, for a more public-relations-friendly picture of the faith.

⁵ Perhaps unknown to Taylor, Mormon literature was already addressing questions of Mormonism and race—although not in the manner Taylor desired. In 1956, novelist Emma Marr Petersen, wife of conservative Mormon apostle Mark E. Petersen, published a didactic young adult novel *Choose Ye This Day* through Bookcraft, a then-independent Mormon publishing house. In it, Steve and Kent, two Latter-day Saint college football players, are troubled when "a young colored chap," Milo Patterson, checks into football practice with them (42). Neither Steve nor Kent have ever played on an integrated team—this is, after all, only two years after *Brown v. Board of Education*—so they are unsure what to think of their new teammate. Indeed, they continue to vacillate on the issue, even as the southerners on the team "bluntly" tell the coach "that they would not play on the same team with the Negro boy" (43). Finally, after "[t]hreatening letters [are] sent to Patterson's room at the dormitory," and the southerners call for a boycott to stop him from playing, Steve and Kent resolve to "talk the thing out with Hank," the legless proprietor of the local hamburger joint. Kent, however, a faithful Latter-day Saint, remains reluctant to do so. "Even the Church holds out against the Negroes," he says, "[...] So why should we take them in?" (44-45).

What follows in *Choose Ye This Day* is a chapter entitled "Hank's Point of View," which attempts, oddly, to justify both the church's mid-century racial policies and its very limited acceptance of certain forms of integration. It begins as Kent asks Hank's opinion "about this Patterson rebellion over at school." Hank responds that his "attitude on [the] subject is pretty will [sic] guided by [his] religious views," which he delineates in a sermon-like monologue that begins with a discussion of the Mormon belief in a pre-mortal life followed by certain theories for why there are diverse races on the earth. According to Hank's understanding, which was not dissimilar to that of many mid-century Mormons, during Satan's rebellion against God, "[s]ome of God's defenders were more valiant than others. Some were disloyal, but not so bad that they had to be driven out with Lucifer." Hank then describes how later, after Satan and his followers had been cast out of heaven, God prepared to send his children to earth:

"When the time arrived for us to come to this earth, it appears to have been the plan of the Lord to reward us according to our loyalty.

"How could he do that? It seems quite easy, as I look at it, for he permitted those who were most obedient to be born into this life with white skins, and to have opportunities such as are to be had in our country.

"Others were born with dark skins in the jungles of Africa or in the valleys of the Amazon. Still others were born in China or Korea, or India, where opportunities are not as great as here. (48)

For Hank, it is "a case of reaping what we sowed": the "white person is born white because he was more valiant than others in the life before we came here, and [...] a colored person was born colored because he was not so valiant." Hank, to be sure, is quick to assure the young people that "[a]ll except the Negro" can have "all the blessings of the church." "Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiians, Indians, Koreans, and people of all other races may have all the blessings of the Church, including temple marriage," he states, "but not the negro." (48-49).

Having established this foundation, Hank segues to his opinion on the "football argument." Again, according to his point of view, "[e]ach race may develop within itself," and as "far as the Negroes are concerned," they should be given "every right and privilege within their race that [whites] claim for [themselves] within [their] own race." Still, Hank is willing to extend this condition only to a point, warning his listeners to neither "become intimate with them in any way" nor "intermarry with them" because "that would bring the curse of Cain upon children born to such a marriage." Tolerance, too, should be cautioned:

I must admit that one great danger in being as tolerant as we would wish to be is that some of our people lose their balance and forget that there is after all a barrier between white people and Negroes which should never be crossed. It was the Lord and not man who established that barrier.

When man tries to break down a wall set up by the Lord himself, he is asking for trouble, and only trouble can come from intermarriage between white people and Negroes.

Still, even with this belief in a "barrier" established by God to keep whites and blacks separate, Hank nevertheless "support[s] the school president and the governor" in integration since he believes that there is nothing wrong with "allowing a Negro to play on [the] team, as long as [the white players] did not take him so far into [their] social life that some white girl might become infatuated with him" (50-51).

Clearly, literature like this was not what Taylor had in mind.

⁶ For evidence to this claim, Keller cites the following quotation from Elder Richard L. Evan, an influential apostle who hosted the weekly broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir:

Along with the printing and circulation of good ideas, of course, there has also been the printing and circulation of bad ideas. Some of the things we see in print cause us to give thanks for the glory of God and the intelligence of man, and some of the things we see in print make us ashamed — ashamed of our own kind. Filth has been circulated in the name of realism. Vicious suggestion has been circulated in the name of liberalism. Too many have found it profitable to peddle pulp that has excited the imagination and poisoned the minds of our youth — to popularize a type of literature which is called "frank," but which is really rotten; which is called "realistic" but which is really immoral backwash. (15)

⁷ Under Correlation, however, the place for fiction in official church publications grew smaller and more policed. By the late 1980s, fiction all but disappeared from the *Ensign*. Very little happened by way of progress, to be sure, until the cultural effects of correlation began to be felt, thus giving Mormon writers something to resist and protest. By the 1980s, Mormon literature had no greater champion than Eugene England. As a graduate student at Stanford University in 1966, England co-founded *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, which would become a major venue for Mormon creative writing for the remainder of the twentieth century. Ten years later, England was among the co-founders of the Association for Mormon Letters, to date the only professional association specifically for Mormon literary scholars. As professor of English at Brigham Young University, beginning in 1977, England taught Mormon literature courses and regularly contributed articles on the subject to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and *BYU Studies*. Among these articles was "The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature after 150 Years." As the title suggests, England looks back over the history of Mormon literature, from the earliest poems to stories by writers then at work, like Douglas Thayer and Donald Marshall. At the close of the article, England looks to the future and speculates that "the greatest Mormon literature will be written by those who [...] are capable of severe orthodoxies, but who are also able to transcend the narrowness and limitations orthodoxy implies into new freedom, enlarged possibilities" (149-150).

⁸ While Keller failed to make the connection, his portrait of a "puritanic-paranoid-apocalyptic" Mormonism, with its deep suspicions about literature's subversive satanic agenda, presented a kind of parallel to the American far right at mid-century, which relied heavily on institutionalized paranoia and apocalyptic forebodings in their efforts to sniff out Communist infiltrations and un-American activities in artistic communities and industries.

⁹ To some extent, Cracroft's approach finds a parallel in the discourse of the academic right in the 1980s and 1990s as well.

¹⁰ In "Danger on the Right! Danger on the Left!: The Ethics of Recent Mormon Fiction," one of his last essays on Mormon literature before his untimely death in 2001, England did not employ the term "Faithful Realism" in the latter essay, his description of works that belonged to a "radical middle" of Mormon writing, which took "no simplistic pro-Mormon or anti-Mormon agenda," but rather sought "esthetic skill and ethical insight," seem similar to works he identified in the earlier essay as Faithful Realist (30).

¹¹ In an April 1971 sermon entitled "The Iron Rod," for instance, during the Church's annual General Conference, the architect of correlation, Elder Harold B. Lee, spoke against those "who claim to be Church members but are [...] standing aloof and seemingly inclined to hold in derision the faithful who choose to accept Church authorities as God's special witnesses of the gospel and his agents in directing the affairs of the Church."

¹² At the same time, however, traditional associations of passing with fraud, misdirection, and deceit popularly associate passing not only with anxieties about being discovered, exposed, and punished, but also with self-hatred and the betrayal of one's origins and community (Harrison 5, Hostert 12, Schlossberg 3-4). Linda Schlossberg, moreover, has also observed that passing engages in its own critical work. It "wreaks havoc with accepted systems of social recognition and cultural intelligibility" and "blurs the carefully marked lines of race, gender, and class, calling attention to the ways in which identity categories intersect, overlap, construct, and deconstruct one [an]other" (2).

¹³ This chapter's interest in passing, however, is less interested in its real socio-cultural dimension than its application as a literary trope that texts employ to carry out utopian cultural work. Indeed, as critic Kathleen Pfeiffer notes, "passing is rich with literary possibilities," offering not only the promise of "mystery, betrayal, suspense, and subterfuge"—almost always desirable in a work of fiction—but also the potential for "pointed social criticism and resonant political commentary" (1). Historically, it has been employed perhaps most extensively in works by and about African-Americans, leading critic Maria Fabi to suggest that it was even "central to the rise and development of the African American novelistic tradition" in the years preceding the Harlem Renaissance (4). Something similar

could be said about Mormon novels in the early twentieth century, particularly in the novels of Nephi Anderson, which use the passing trope as a way to raise questions about—and then articulate—post-utopian Mormon identity and distinctiveness. Anderson’s passing Mormons, however, are different from those that emerged in post-1960s fiction. Whereas Anderson’s Mormons feared passive passing in mainstream society, Faithful Realism’s Mormons ultimately reject passive passing within the Mormon community itself.

¹⁴ The act, motivated by Frank’s fear of being seen as “unworthy” by members of his congregation, is one of the few instances of passing in the novel to have a successful (albeit temporary) return as it wins for Frank the approval and congratulations of his sister Leola, who tells him, alluding to other instances of passing in the ward, “There’re a lot worse people in this hall than you” (136-137).

¹⁵ Another important example of passing in *Falling Toward Heaven* is Howard’s mother Emily. Like her son, Emily begins the novel concealing a “true self” from Mormon authorities, namely her bishop Gerald Hansen. As one who “enjoy[s] being in charge” and “speaking in front of large groups,” Emily finds her usual responsibilities in church—generally comprised of “teaching or organizing dinners”—insufficient to tap her potential (127). Calling herself an “Apostate,” she secretly extends her authority as a Relief Society president, the highest position available to woman in a Mormon congregation, by privately blessing other women with her backsliding husband’s priesthood, a practice she knows is “not traditional” for a contemporary Mormon woman, and offering unorthodox advice to women on subjects like marital disharmony and chastity (39). Later, when she is found out, Hansen releases her from her responsibilities with the expectation that her non-traditional behavior will stop. Emily then begins a journey, much like her son’s, toward a more authentic self. She enrolls in college and begins meeting with Mormon feminists to discuss their “pet peeves” about patriarchy and the Church (207). At the same time, she continues to pass as a submissive woman before Hansen, with whom she meets weekly, “swallowing her anger” and “referring women with problems to him,” rather than attending to them herself. Furthermore, she remains silent in Sunday school, giving up “excessive speculation” she could wake the audience up when the teacher “[drones] on about genealogy and staying home with your children” (208).

Still, through the encouragement of Howard and Allison, she acquires the courage to be more open about her unorthodox self. While remaining complicit with her promise to “never bless another woman by anyone’s priesthood,” she becomes more outspoken about women’s issues and prepares to establish a home for abused women, despite resistance from local Mormons who “don’t want that kind of women in town.” At the end of the novel, she remains continues to be limited by religious restrictions, yet she achieves a personal victory, finding happiness she has not felt “for months, maybe years,” when Hansen agrees to support her home for abused women and pray that women “will one day receive the blessings” of the priesthood (290). While the *Falling Toward Heaven* ends before Emily can fully be the person she wishes to be, it offers hope that women like her will someday be able to participate fully in Mormonism without having to pass. Indeed, in Emily’s small but significant strides toward greater gender equality, the novel provides a model for Mormon feminist activism—a call to set aside the submissive façade and live more authentically as women of power and authority.

¹⁶ For a more complete history of Mother in Heaven, and the controversies surrounding her, see Linda Wilcox’s “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven” (*Sunstone* 115 [1999]: 78-87), Margaret Merrill Toscano’s “Is There a Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology?: An Investigation into Discourse of Power” (*Sunstone* 133 [2004]: 14-22), and David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido’s “‘A Mother There’: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven” (*BYU Studies* 50.1 [2011]: 70-97).

¹⁷ Currently, the official LDS leadership manual, *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), provides the following guidelines for depicting deity:

God the Father and the Holy Ghost are not to be portrayed in meetings, dramas, or musicals.

If the Savior is portrayed, it must be done with the utmost reverence and dignity. Only brethren of wholesome personal character should be considered for the part. The person who portrays the Savior should not sing or dance. When speaking, he should use only direct quotations of scriptures spoken by the Savior.

At the end of the performance, the person should not wear the costume in the foyer or elsewhere. He should change immediately into street clothes.

The Savior should not be portrayed by children in dramatization except in a nativity scene.

(13.6.15)

¹⁸ Another scene disrupts the staid nature of contemporary Mormonism with unorthodox spiritual experiences that subvert the routinized policies of correlation Mormonism. Late in the novel, Frank lays hands upon Gomer, the wife of an imprisoned polygamist, as she prepared to deliver a baby. Having “never healed anybody,” Frank is reluctant to administer to Gomer, but bowing to duty and pressure from Marianne, his Lutheran wife, he recruits the

assistance of Rossler D. Jarbody, a backsliding Mormon lawyer, who believes “[a] man in [his] spiritual state would do more harm than good” for the situation (375-376). Still, Jarbody agrees to accompany Frank to the hospital, and, after procuring a Coke bottle of consecrated olive oil, lately used for the healing of a horse, they pronounce a blessing upon Gomer that promises her that she “shalt be healed and delivered of a fine baby boy which [she] shalt call Jezreel.” Frank “cheer[s] up” during the blessing and speaks “a few promises” as prompted by the Holy Ghost. Even Jarbody, who is convinced that he has found a “nest of the occult,” finds the blessings “[a]n exceptional experience” (378). Indeed, despite the disorderly and unorthodox quality of nearly every element in the scene—the backsliding priesthood holders, the polygamist, the Coke bottle—the blessing proves both effective and prophetic.

¹⁹ In his book *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (1996), D. Michael Quinn argues that Mormon attitudes towards same-sex attraction and homosexuality gradually shifted from “relative tolerance to homophobia” over the course of the twentieth-century. Quinn’s argument suggests that church leaders who came of age in the nineteenth-century were generally more tolerant of homosexuality than later generations. He identifies 1958—incidentally, the era when *The Backslider* takes place—as a turning point in Mormon tolerance. Prior to this year, he suggests, Mormon leaders had generally been willing to grant a certain leniency in situations involving same-sex attraction or homoerotic behavior; however, following Bruce R. McConkie’s 1958 controversial but highly-influential publication of *Mormon Doctrine*, which took a hardline against homosexuality and other forms of “lewdness, lasciviousness, and licentiousness,” additional retrenchment-era church leaders made it a subject of their sermons and discourses (375, see 375-383).

Chapter Four

“A Terrible Psychological and Nearly Physical Disturbance”:

The Mormon Historical Novel, Mountain Meadows, and the Problem of

“What Actually Happened”

“It seems that, once having taken a stand and put forth a story, the leaders of the Mormon Church have felt that they should maintain it, regardless of all the evidence to the contrary. In their concern to let the matter die, they do not see that it can never be finally settled until it is accepted as any other historical incident, with a view only to finding the facts. To shrink from it, to discredit any who try to inquire into it, to refuse to discuss it, or to hesitate to accept all the evidence fearlessly, is not only to keep it a matter of controversy, but to make the most loyal followers doubt the veracity of their leaders in presenting other matters of history.”—Juanita Brooks, 1950

I.

“I felt like I had an earthquake under my feet,” confesses Elder Hans Mattsson, an emeritus General Authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in a front-page *New York Times* article (20 July 2013) about his highly-public crisis of faith. Like a growing number of twenty-first century Mormons, Mattsson had recently begun to question his religious beliefs after encountering information on the internet that “contradicted the church’s history and teachings.” Among the information that shook “the foundation on which he had built his life” were facts about the polygamous marriages of founder Joseph Smith; the historicity and translations of the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham, two works of canonized Mormon scripture; and the history of Mormon policies that had banned black men from the priesthood until 1978. For Mattsson, these discoveries came as “a terrible psychological and nearly physical

disturbance.” As he relates in the article, “Everything I’d been taught, everything I’d been proud to preach about and witness about just crumbled under my feet” (Goodstein).

This highly-public crisis of faith is only the most recent episode in an ongoing culture war in post-utopian Mormonism. Confronted with the challenge of assimilation, Mormons in the early twentieth century carefully reconfigured their institutional memory to construct a usable past from the debris of their utopian experimentation, forging a new master narrative (what Samuel W. Taylor called a “never-never land of Mormonism”) that retained a sense of Mormon distinctiveness, yet distanced the church from its radical entanglements with polygamy, communal economics, and fierce geographical isolationism. As this post-utopian narrative became increasingly more orthodox and institutionalized, particularly through the correlation movement, it was cleansed of some controversial elements and inconsistencies, like Joseph Smith’s polygamy and alternative accounts of his early visions, to instill a sense of sacred heritage among church members, while also narrowing the differences between Mormons and the rest of the nation (see Flake 114-117, Bowman 152-154, Taylor 20). At the same time, however, it cultivated what J. Aaron Sanders has described as “an exceptionalist view of [Mormon] history—a *metanarrative* that ‘organizes [historical narratives] into an ideological edifice’” (92-93).¹ In a sense, it transformed the Mormon past into a crystal fortress, seemingly unassailable, but actually vulnerable, delicate, and fragile. Indeed, cracks began to form on its bulwarks and towers shortly after World War II, if not earlier, as a new generation of Mormon historians began to investigate counter-narratives to the orthodox history as a way to “broaden the base for understanding” the Mormon past (Walker, *Mormon History* 61). Often called the New Mormon History, this approach won academic acclaim, yet gradually became a source of tension among those who placed great faith in the master narrative’s capacity to uplift, instruct,

and inspire. This tension became particularly potent in the 1980s and 1990s as Mormons engaged, along with the rest of the nation, in polarizing culture wars to define both their public image and their communal identity. When prominent Mormon leaders became openly critical of the New Mormon History, and, in September 1993, sanctioned the excommunication of some of its most radical practitioners, it became clear that there was not only “a longing on the part of church authorities for more traditional, faith-promoting history,” but also a determination to take official measures against those who proposed alternatives to it (Walker 68).²

II.

Interestingly, Mormon historical novels of the 1980s and 1990s reflect this culture war. For instance, the most popular historical novels of the era, the nine volumes that constitute Gerald N. Lund’s *The Work and the Glory* series, represent a kind of conservative response to the rise of the New Mormon History. These novels, written by an employee of the educational wing of the LDS Church, chronicle the seventeen-year history of the Latter-day Saint movement from its beginnings in New York to its arrival in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Focusing on the lives of a fictional family of stalwart Mormon converts, it uses the historical novel genre to affirm the integrity and orthodoxy of the master narrative, casting Mormonism as the decisive player in the epic latter-day battle between Good and Evil. As Richard Cracroft notes, the series presents Mormon history “as a sacred myth, a burning bush that must be approached with shoes removed” (249). In his own commentary on the series, Lund supports this reading, asserting that the novels were written to show that “the overruling, almighty hand of God” is discernible “*in every hour and in every moment* of the existence of the Church, from the beginning until now” (Lund, *All is Well* xiv). Each chapter in the novels, in fact, concludes with copious “Chapter Notes” that help readers distinguish, according to Lund, “which events are truly historical and

not the figment of the writer's imagination" (Lund, *Like a Fire* vii).³ Through them, Lund asserts the unquestionable historicity of the "sacred myth," much in the same spirit of the critics of the New Mormon History, who encouraged Mormon historians to likewise see the hand of God in Mormon history lest their work proves so "objective, impartial, and scholarly" about the Mormon past that it "unwittingly [gives] equal time to the adversary," thus becoming a "faith destroyer" (Packer 261-263, 267, 269). For these critics, the overwhelming success of *The Work and the Glory* no doubt represented a kind of vindication of their perspective—even proof that members of the church prefer the stability of a faith-promoting master narrative to the uncertainties of ambiguous history.⁴

The Work and the Glory novels were not the only Mormon historical novels to emerge from these culture wars, however. Seven years prior to the publication of the first volume in *The Work and the Glory* (*Pillar of Light*, 1990), Orson Scott Card published the historical novel *Saints* (originally *A Woman of Destiny*, 1983), which owes an obvious debt to the New Mormon History. Set during Mormonism's controversial Nauvoo era (1839-1846), the novel explores the origins of Mormon polygamy and offers awarts-and-all portrayal of Joseph Smith's personality, which contrasts markedly with the caution and reverence with which Lund approaches these subjects in his novels. Moreover, *Saints* presents itself as if it were the work of O. Kirkham, a fictional amateur Mormon historian from the late-twentieth century, whose story as a researcher provides not only a metafictional frame for the novel's primary historical plot, but also a metahistorical device through which Card can comment on history, historical fiction, and historiography. Indeed, as Kirkham labors to research and write the history of his ancestor, a prominent Mormon woman from the era, he encounters unexpected challenges when an ambiguous historical document seems to undermine the orthodox account of "What Actually

Happened” in a miraculous event that plays a key part in Mormonism’s later master narrative. Recognizing that the document’s ambiguity keeps the “truth” of “What Actually Happened” ultimately “out of reach,” Kirkham proposes an alternative history of the miracle, a kind of compromise with the orthodox narrative, which compels him to embrace a heterodoxy that allows for “different kinds of truth” in the absence of historical certainty (662). For Kirkham, this heterodoxy does not provide the neat closure of an authoritative chapter note, but it does create space for the coexistence of multiple readings of events, which frees Kirkham to construct narratives that help him come to terms with what is decidedly unknown about the Mormon past.

In its openness to multiple readings of the past, to be sure, *Saints* not only reflects the New Mormon History and Mormon culture wars of the late twentieth century, but also a much broader cultural moment. Indeed, by the time Card, a science fiction writer, turned to the historical novel to deal with historical tensions within the Mormon community, many American writers had already begun to revisit and reinvent the genre as a way to cope with the ongoing violence and political chaos of the twentieth century. To be sure, no shortage of historical novels existed in the early twentieth century; however, as Robert Scholes notes in *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979), novels like John Barth’s *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) and Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) broke rank with other twentieth-century historical novels in their rejection of “the notion that history may be retrieved by objective investigations of fact” (206). Indeed, as Linda Hutcheon describes in *The Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), the late-twentieth century was a time when historical fiction began to display a postmodern awareness that historical narratives, like fictional narratives, are “linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms,” and therefore inherently suspect (105). For her, these novels differed from their predecessors because they took a “questioning stance towards [...]

conventions of narrative, of reference, of the inscribing of subjectivity, of [its] identity as textuality, and even of [its] implication in ideology.” They were works, that is, that undermined “empiricist and positivist epistemologies” and cast doubt on the “very possibility of historical knowledge” (106).⁵

That *Saints* takes such a “questioning stance” against the orthodoxy of the master Mormon narrative accounts, perhaps, for why it did not fare as well among late-century Latter-day Saints as *The Work and the Glory*. Indeed, in questioning the integrity of the master narrative, the novel undermines not only the comforting and stabilizing notion that history—including sacred history—can be recovered and known, but also the notion that God systematically interjects a divine hand into the unfolding of events. At the same time, however, Card’s stance also frees the text up to play with historical ambiguity and possibility in a way that creates an enclave of imaginative space where problematic history, like the kind that has troubled Hans Mattsson and other Mormons who have lost faith in the Mormon master narrative, can be addressed, mediated, and redirected towards ethical ends. Indeed, as critic Amy J. Elias notes in *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960s Fiction* (2001), late-century historical novels that take such a stance often trouble our assumptions about history knowledge in order to inform ethical responses to the injustices of the past. Because they are suspicious of positivist or empirical approaches to history, that is, and consider them “inadequate to deal with the late-twentieth-century realities it faces,” they view the past as a “terrifying, chaotic, and humbling incomprehensibility,” a sublime Absence where history is something one desires, but cannot know (xii, xviii, 56). This creates a “post-traumatic consciousness, akin to the state of mind of war survivors,” which manifests itself in a “compulsive, repetitive turning toward the past” in pursuit of “the comforting self-awareness that is supposed to come from historical knowledge,”

yet remains perpetually subject to deferral in the face of this sublimity (xii, xvii). In a sense, these works foreground a “metahistorical consciousness” that seems “caught” between the history (lowercase) one experiences or feels in the present—the “history that hurts”—and the History (uppercase) that one desires, but cannot know or experience—the “historical sublime.” For Elias, this obsessive “turn toward the unspeakable historical sublime,” while always finding deferral, is what allows for the “perpetual reinterpretation and re-presentation” that ultimately enables these novels to use the past “in the interest of ethical action” (xviii, 69, 219).

In making this claim, Elias draws upon the writings of Jean-Françoise Lyotard and Hayden White to show that historiographical efforts to portray “What Actually Happened” (to use Card’s phrase) tend only to “[deform] history” and dull ethical responses to it by providing “proof, empirical reason, the rule of truth, knowledge, and narrative expression” to make difficult history more fathomable—and therefore less painful—in the present. With Lyotard, Elias suggests that ethical action in response to such history comes through “*narratives that resist narrative*,” or “postmodern narrative that refuses empiricism and pursues the sublime in the interests of political and cultural resistance to totalization, to hegemony, to power” (28-29). Furthermore, she notes that Hayden White makes a similar point in “The Politics of Historical Interpretation” (1982) when he suggests that recognizing the sublimity of the past is necessary to bestow a utopian impetus on historiography (39-40). As White suggests, utopian politics can take effect “only by virtue of the contrast it offers to a past that is understood [...] as a ‘spectacle’ of ‘confusion,’ ‘uncertainty,’ and ‘moral anarchy’” (128). For him, historiographic approaches that aim for coherence and comprehension “deprive history of the kind of meaninglessness which alone can goad the moral sense of living human beings to make their lives different for themselves and their children” (128). Pretensions of objectivity and disinterest, therefore, are

“anti-utopian” in their failure to give the trauma of history the disorder it needs to instill enough repugnance to compel individuals to change present historical situations (128).⁶ As Elias concludes, it is this sublimity, ambiguity, and meaninglessness of History that ultimately causes the kind of contemplation of the past that motivates one to take ethical action in the present (42).⁷

Such contemplation is apparent in and provoked by O. Kirkham’s pursuit of “What Actually Happened” in *Saints*. Entranced by the history of his pioneer ancestor, he compulsively revisits controversial, ambiguous Mormon history without arriving at satisfying truths about them. For him as well as for readers, his writing becomes a record of what Elias calls “a desire for Truth that is Out There”: a contemplation of and desire for the sublime “What Actually Happened” (xviii). At the same time, however, the way the novel foregrounds this desire allows *Saints* to transform the historical sublime into a utopian enclave of historical uncertainty, an Absence-space where master narratives lose their orthodox status and imagination breaks institutional and cultural taboos to contemplate ethical responses to both the pain of experiential history and the unfathomability of the historical sublime. In a sense, the pursuit of the historical sublime frees Kirkham to imagine aspects of the past that fall outside of the master narratives, thus transforming the past into an ambiguous place where the desire to narrate (or metanarrate) becomes subordinate to the contemplative, creative play that occurs on the deferred semi-boundary between the felt “history that hurts” and the historical sublime.

Sadly, a majority of late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century Mormon historical novels have not followed *Saints* in creating enclaves where the ambiguities of the Mormon past can be explored towards productive ethical ends. Indeed, while Mattsson’s front-page faith crisis indicates that the post-utopian master narrative remains a stumbling block for many twenty-first-century Mormons, the standard model for Mormon historical novels remains

the orthodox and highly-annotated *The Work and the Glory* series. At the start of the twenty-first century, in fact, the Mormon historical novel seems at risk of becoming little more than an echo chamber, a place where Mormon history is perpetually remade in the image of its own master narrative. Important exceptions exist, however, particularly among recent historical novels about one of the most painful episodes in Mormon history, the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Like *Saints*, many of these novels offer examples of how the Mormon historical novel, following the model of other postmodern historical novels, can draw attention to the historical sublime to create utopian enclaves where the imaginative, heterodox work of “perpetual reinterpretation and re-presentation” of painful history can propose and promote ethical action and community healing.

III.

On 11 September 1857, a group of Mormons and Native Americans, hearing news that the United States government had sent an army to quell a rumored Mormon rebellion, ambushed an emigrant wagon train from Arkansas, killing about 120 men, women and children in a Southern Utah valley called Mountain Meadows.⁸ For five days, the members of the wagon train had been at the mercy of their attackers, who had laid siege to them after local Mormon leaders had deemed the wagon train’s presence a threat to Mormon safety in the region. Starved and low on ammunition, the emigrants eventually surrendered their weapons with a promise that the Mormons would convey them to the nearest town and protect them from additional harm. In transit, however, the Mormons betrayed this trust, slaying all but the youngest members of the wagon train. Shortly thereafter, to cover up their part in the killing, the Mormon perpetrators took oaths of silence and agreed to blame the whole of it on their Native American allies. These oaths proved remarkably durable; even today, after more than one hundred and fifty years, the

Mormon community rarely discusses the massacre, and details about how it happened and who ordered and participated in it remain elusive and controversial. As one historian has noted, “[a] veil of silence has shrouded the truth about Mountain Meadows,” leaving “an immense technical challenge” for those who to try to piece together a coherent narrative of the tragedy (Bagley xv).

Initially, official Mormon histories either ignored the massacre or blamed it on the Native Americans and a small number of rogue Mormons.⁹ Accounts of the massacre changed in 1950, however, with the publication of Juanita Brooks’ *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950), the first historical study to attempt a dispassionate, evidence-based account of the massacre.

Suspicious of the folklore and sensationalism of earlier histories, Brooks, a practicing Mormon and descendent of one of the massacre’s perpetrators, prefaced her work by stating that Mormons “should be able to view this tragedy objectively and dispassionately, and to see it in its proper setting as a study of social psychology as well as of history” (v). Accordingly, her account was sympathetic to perpetrators and victims both. The Arkansas wagon train, long demonized in Mormon accounts as culpable for their own demise, stirring up the local Indians and Mormons with threats and menacing behavior, were cast as an understandably desperate crew who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Mormons, likewise, were not the cultish, blood-thirsty sadists of so many accounts of the massacre, but rather a misguided group whose paranoia over the looming threat of an invading army from Washington, coupled with the fiery rhetoric their leaders used to prepare them for war, led them to commit a heinous atrocity. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Native Americans who had participated in the massacre, long blamed for instigating it and perpetrating the majority of it, became minor secondary players, merely accomplices to the Mormons’ schemes. “When local historians conduct interested groups to the spot [of the massacre],” Brooks wrote at the end of her book, “they tell the story in its setting as a

tragedy which developed from a complex chain of circumstances, in which white men, not Indians, were chiefly responsible” (164).¹⁰

Today, Brooks’ account of the massacre remains the standard of Mountain Meadows scholarship, although subsequent historians—particularly since the year 2000—have sought to update her work with new evidence. Among them have been William Wise’s *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Legend and a Monumental Crime* (1976), Will Bagley’s *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (2002), Sally Denton’s *American Massacre* (2003), Shannon A. Novak’s *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (2008), and Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard’s *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (2008). Several collections of primary documents about the massacre have also been published recently, including David H. Bigler and Will Bagley’s *Innocent Blood: Essential Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (2008) and Turley and Walker’s *Mountain Meadows Massacre: The Andrew Jenson and David H. Morris Collections* (2009). Interestingly, though, Brooks’ call for an objective and dispassionate view of Mountain Meadows has not been well-heeded by these authors. While thoroughly researched, both Bagley’s book and Walker, Turley, and Leonard’s book seem determined to condemn and exonerate Mormon leader Brigham Young respectively, arguing passionately for their perspectives without delivering conclusive evidence. Other works, most notably Sally Denton’s *American Massacre*, are masterfully recounted, but diminish their value by relying heavily on controversial secondary sources and drawing extreme conclusions based on circumstantial evidence. Like Brooks’ *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, each of these subsequent works insists—in one way or another—on its own objectivity, yet each has its own biases.¹¹ In *Blood of the Prophets*, for instance, Bagley insists that he has “rejected the most obvious myths

[about the massacre] and use[d] common sense to reconstruct the event as accurately as the sources will permit” in order “to tell the story of Mountain Meadows forthrightly” (xvi, xix). Denton, similarly, maintains that she has based her narrative on “documentary evidence” and “taken no liberties with the factual record” (xi). Finally, Walker, Turley, and Leonard observe that “writing about the massacre has been characterized by a spirit of charge and countercharge,” and suggest that questions about the controversies surrounding the massacre “are best answered by telling the story and letting events speak for themselves” (xv).

Of these three approaches, the latter—written by three of the pioneers of the New Mormon History—best approximates the New Mormon History’s approach to taking a relativistic view of events, although the suggestion that there is a “story” to tell, rather than “stories,” implies the notion that a single, complete narrative can be carved out of the documentary record(s) of Mountain Meadows. Indeed, the task of “letting events speak for themselves” itself seems problematic when one accounts for the contradictory and biased nature of the documentary record. As Bagley notes, “[v]irtually every explanation of this episode has a distinct bias and can be challenged for one good reason or another,” creating difficulties for historians who wish to construct a narrative of what happened in meadows (xv). Bagley, to be sure, does not think these difficulties are insurmountable. “Anyone studying the Mountain Meadows massacre,” he argues, “must finally confront two questions: what happened and why.” While he believes that “[w]e will never know all the details of this ‘awful tale of blood,’” he nevertheless insists that the massacre’s “causes and effects are not an impenetrable mystery.” “Those who pretend that the event is beyond comprehension,” he states, “apparently prefer not to understand it” (380). Indeed, if Bagley is right, then there is a paradox to understanding the Mountain Meadows Massacre. As he argues in his conclusion, better comprehension and

understanding of the massacre will bring about justice for the victims and atonement for the Mormon People and their leaders. As he suggests in a final ultimatum:

There is, ultimately, no easy way for the Latter-day Saints to resolve the problems posed by this awful tale until they admit their historic responsibility for a terrible crime. The faith must accept its role, open all of its records on the subject, acknowledge its accountability, and repent—or learn to live with the guilt. Church leaders might wish until the end of time that the matter could be forgotten, but history bears witness that only the truth will lay to rest the ghosts of Mountain Meadows. (382)

As both the New Mormon History and postmodern theorists like Lyotard and White suggest, however, the “truth” about the past is elusive, particularly in respect to controversial episodes like Mountain Meadows, so any “true” narrative the Mormons provide about the massacre—whether it agrees with Bagley’s narrative or not—will be as much of a construct as any other. Besides, if Hayden White is correct that comprehension and understanding “deprive history of the kind of meaningfulness which alone can goad the moral sense of living human beings to make their lives different for themselves and their children” (128), then Bagley’s call for a more “truthful” narrative would actually work against his desire for a Mormon change of heart. Meaninglessness, not comprehension, is the path to ethical action.

Admittedly, White’s view of the sublime—the murky space where truth is unfathomable, unrepresentable, and meaningless—as a site for political change seems counterintuitive; however, as recent histories of Mountain Meadows have shown, even exhaustively researched accounts of the massacre fall short of knowing “What Actually Happened,” and their re-construction of the most controversial aspects of the episode usually flounder under what Walker, Turley, and

Leonard call “a spirit of charge and countercharge” (xv). Still, Bagley is right that the “ghosts of Mountain Meadows” need to be “[laid] to rest,” and the Mormons, as the perpetrators of the massacre, have a primary role in this endeavor. However, just as Bagley suggests, what is known about the massacre—that the Mormons carried out and covered up a “mass murder”—is a challenge for “a religion claiming direct divine inspiration,” particularly since high-ranking (and, for Mormons, divinely-appointed) leaders like Brigham Young, their prophet, and George A. Smith, a leading apostle, were party in some way to the massacre (382). If nothing else, it is a challenge to the master narrative that helps define their ideological boundaries and identities as Mormons. And restructuring these borders, as the faith crises of Hans Mattsson and other twenty-first-century Mormons show, can be perilous work.

To date, narrative non-fiction has done much to make people aware of and understand the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but its “charge and countercharge” approach has not led to the kind of community healing that its authors have envisioned. Nor have works like Christopher Cain’s *September Dawn*, a gory 2007 film about the massacre, done much, to paraphrase White, to “goad the moral sense” of Mormons to change how they interact with themselves and others, or how they “endow their lives with meaning” (128). As indicated above, however, recent Mormon historical novels about the massacre have taken a markedly different approach to the massacre. Avoiding problematic representations of “What Actually Happened” at the massacre, these novels follow the trend of recent historical novels by depicting the past as something sublime—a traumatic absence that is beyond comprehension and meaning. While these novels have been less-successful commercially than the non-fiction of Bagley, Denton, and Walker, Turley, and Leonard, their refusal to declare “What Actually Happened” allows them to pursue the historical sublime as a way that invites contemplation of the unfathomable tragedy of

Mountain Meadows and suggests ways to end the silence that has long been a barrier between the Mormons and those still scarred by the memory of the massacre. Indeed, these novels, while at odds with how to best end this silence, function in a post-utopian capacity by articulating the boundaries of silence and prompting ethical efforts to propose alternatives to them

III.

Since the nineteenth century, Mountain Meadows novels have generally fallen into three categories: 1) historical novels that depict the Mountain Meadows Massacre or its immediate aftermath; 2) historical novels inspired by the history of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but not specifically about it; and 3) novels set in modern times that draw in some way upon the massacre's history. Important examples include Charles Wesley Alexander's *Brigham Young's Daughter* (1870), Marie A. Walsh's *My Queen* (1878), Joaquin Miller's *The Danites in the Sierras* (1881), A. D. Gash's *The False Star: A Tale of the Occident* (1899), Charles Brewer's *Retribution at Last: A Mormon Tragedy of the Rockies* (1899), Harry Leon Wilson's *The Lions of the Lord* (1903), Josiah Gibbs' *Kawich's Gold Mine* (1913), Jack London's *The Star Rover* (1915), Frank Chester Field's *The Rocky Road to Jericho* (1935), Vardis Fisher's *The Children of God* (1939), Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* (1941), Amelia Bean's *The Fancher Party* (1958), Lee Nelson's *The Storm Testament IV* (1985), Grace Conlon's *Satan's Caravan* (1995), Gerald Grimmett's *The Ferry Woman* (2001), Marilyn McMeem Brown's *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass* (2001), Judith Freeman's *Red Water* (2002), Hugh F. Wynn's *The Mormon and Mr. Sullivan* (2002), D. B. Newton's *Fire in the Desert* (2002, 2005), Beth Shumway Moore's *Mormon Reflections: The Path to Mountain Meadows* (2000, 2007), Charles M. Larson's *Destroying Angel* (2008), Alyssa York's *Effigy* (2008), Dane Coolidge's *The Fighting Danites* (2004) and *Riders of Deseret* (2010), and Sarah Dunster's *Lightning Tree* (2012).

Of these novels, Marilyn McMeen Brown's *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass* (2001) and Judith Freeman's *Red Water* (2002) pay particular attention to the way the historical sublime opens up space for ethical action. *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass*, the more linear historical novel of the two, presents perhaps the most controversial views on the massacre. Set within the twenty years between the 1857 massacre and the 1877 execution of John D. Lee, the only person tried and convicted for his role in Mountain Meadows, the novel focuses on Lee and a fictional family of Mormons who participate in the massacre. Each chapter centers on a single character, usually Jacob Lorry, a young Mormon who participates in the massacre; Elizabeth Worley, an orphan Jacob's age who lives with and later marries into the Lorry family; and Hannah Dunham Lorry Lee, a child of massacre victims who is adopted into the Lorry family, and later marries into the Lee family. Unlike *Red Water*, *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass* includes the massacre in its narrative along with a depiction of the events leading up to it. In doing so, the book embraces controversial claims that the Fancher-Baker party, the Arkansas wagon train the Mormons attacked in Mountain Meadows, included ruffians who had participated in the Mormon persecutions in Missouri in the 1830s. Generally, however, the novel follows the account of the massacre found in Juanita Brooks' *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, including characterizing the massacre as having been initiated by Native Americans under the guidance of the local Mormon leadership. Also, noting that "it has become the fashion to let the reader know which events are based on fact"—thanks no doubt to *The Work and the Glory*—Brown provides readers with endnotes that constitute a "chapter-by-chapter account" of her research (x). This account, however, is not as exhaustive as Lund's "Chapter Notes," but rather composed of "brief statements" that indicate whether an event in the novel is based on documentary evidence or purely imaginative. Brown's sources are limited to Brooks' text and Anna Jean Backus'

Mountain Meadows Witness (1995), as well as a handful of personal histories by those who participated in the massacre or were close to those who did. Page numbers and other forms of citation are not forthcoming in Brown's notes, and they often read vaguely: "The details of the massacre are on record. There is, in fact, a newborn baby girl who is taken to Rachel Hamblin's home. New evidence says that she was born in March, a few months older than I have portrayed her for the purposes of this story" (390). Where these "details" are "on record," or what this "[n]ew evidence" is, is not a matter of concern for Brown; however, like Lund, she is concerned that readers know the difference between her fiction and the "What Really Happened" of history.

This concern is apparent elsewhere in the novel. In the "Prologue," part of a frame narrative written from the point-of-view of Hannah in 1927, Hannah recounts how her husband, a grandson of John D. Lee, decides to write the story of the Mountain Meadows Massacre "just the way it happened," but dies before he can do so (xi). Taking up the work, Hannah reads through the documents until she can tell "the story as complete as [she] could reconstruct it":

Sometimes I had to guess how John, Jacob, and Elizabeth felt. I'm sure it's not absolutely exact. But I did the best I could. No one may ever see these pages I've written. And even if they find this manuscript in some old crusty envelope with spider webs in it, they may not want to read it. But it is mighty close to the truth, if they're at all interested in it. (xii)

By including this frame, Brown gives *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass* a metafictional dimension similar to what we see in *Saints* and postmodern historical novels like Russell Banks' *Cloudsplitter* (1997) and Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* (1997). While Hannah may be certain that her manuscript is "mighty close to the truth," her metafictional account of its composition functions to raise questions about the document itself—and the documents upon

which it is based, reminding us that “we are epistemologically limited in our ability to know [the] past,” as Linda Hutcheon claims, since the act of working from documents underscores that “we are both spectators of and actors in the historical process” (122). Hannah’s account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, therefore, like the accounts of John D. Lee, Jacob, and Elizabeth, shows that it is itself a manufactured object, a manuscript that constructs a narrative of events that constitutes facts about a past that are not wholly recoverable. It is something “not absolutely exact” that gestures towards, to borrow again from Hutcheon, “our unavoidable difficulties with the concreteness of events [...] and their accessibility” (122).

Brown’s depiction of the massacre foregrounds these difficulties as well. Presented from the third-person limited point-of-view of Jacob Lorry, a fifteen-year-old Mormon, the massacre unfolds in a fragmented, dream-like narrative that draws attention to the slipperiness of what has been written about the massacre. Ambiguous italicized passages, which represent either Jacob’s thoughts or excerpts from the documents Hannah uses to construct her story, alternate with descriptions of the massacre, creating a sense of chaos, disorientation, and instability that mirrors Jacob’s subjective experience during the massacre. Also, unattributed dialogue between the Mormons adds to the confusion of the account by suggesting a kind of anonymity and unanimity among the attackers, which Jacob is not party to because of his youth and last-minute reluctance to participate in the killings. Brown’s account of the massacre, therefore, abounds with the uncertainty of subjective experience. Jacob, we learn, does “not follow what happened very clearly” during the attack (113). Twice, he moves about “as though he were in a dream” (114, 116), and his perception and memory of the massacre are fraught with uncertainties (see 115). What Jacob knows about the Mormon plan of attack also comes into question. Jacob initially knows, for example, that the “intention of the militia was to place the women and children far

ahead so that only the men would be killed.” However, when the Paiutes and Mormons begin to attack and kill the women and children, he questions this knowledge. “If there had ever been a plan to save the women,” he realizes, “it had been abandoned now” (114). Furthermore, when a man he believes to be John D. Lee kills the “sick and wounded,” Jacob becomes confused because he “had not remembered that the death of the sick and wounded had been part of the plan,” leaving him to second-guess his memory (115). Ultimately, this failure of memory and perception gives way to incoherence and doubts about the reality of the experience. “*You are moving through a haze as though the air itself is the only substance that can be real,*” Jacob tells himself. “*Nothing else is real. This carnage cannot be real. All that is real is a perception that below you in the dust is quiet*” (115-116). While this denial of the reality of the carnage of Mountain Meadows soon subsides to Jacob’s realization that he is “not innocent” and “had done a terrible thing,” the uncertainty about “What Actually Happened” remains a sublime space throughout the rest of the novel.

Again, for critics like Hayden White and Amy J. Elias, this sublime space is crucial to the past’s ability to “[prompt] humans” to have an active ethical response to the “monstrous spectacle” they witness (Elias 39). As Elias argues in *Sublime Desire*, one way in which some postmodern historical novels perform an ethical function is by “confront[ing] the historical sublime as repetition and deferral” (55). In *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass*, we see such repetition and deferral in Jacob’s denial of the reality of the carnage of Mountain Meadows, an apparent effort to return to the past that ultimately fails when Jacob is unable to ground what seems to have happened in the real, thus deferring resolution for both him and the reader. Something similar also happens in the aftermath of the atrocity, when “newcomers” to Southern Utah set out to learn “if what they heard about the Mountain Meadows [is] true” (243). Sensing “history that

hurts,” the newcomers investigate rumors of the massacre only to be thwarted by the perpetrators’ silence. The rumors then “enlarge in frightening proportions, becoming embellished with every repetition,” until they transform into songs children chant like “black incantations,” a kind of deferral that compensates for meaning that cannot be recovered from the historical sublime (244). In these cases, characters in the novel attempt to confront what Jacob calls “the unspeakable day at the meadows,” only to find themselves confronting and contemplating its meaninglessness instead (242).

Interestingly, though, rather than overtly drawing upon this repetition and deferral as a ethically useful testimony to the unrepresentable horror of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass* seeks instead to repress this metahistorical play in two ways. First, it villainizes characters who obsessively revisit the massacre—in memory, in rumors, in speech—particularly those who break their oath of silence and offer testimony of what they witnessed in the meadows. Second, it takes the “history that hurts” of Mountain Meadows and makes it secondary to the scapegoating of John D. Lee, a “history that hurts” more. In doing so, it redirects attention away from the victims of the massacre with a kind of martyr’s narrative that casts efforts to recover the past—that is, to confront the historical sublime—as emblems of Lee’s cruel victimization. While justice for the victims is not outside the scope of *The Wine Dark Sea of Grass*, the novel suggests at best that it will be served by means of a transcendental panacea. For instance, in the novel’s epilogue Hannah returns as the frame narrator not to witness to the unknowable trauma of the past, but to dismiss it as a thing “that never mattered to [her].” For her, the knowledge that everyone—victim and perpetrator—will ultimately be “wrapped up” in the arms of Jesus neutralizes both the trauma of the past and the need to end the silence that has obstructed justice for its victims. Reflecting on the fate of her parents, “whose bones still lie in

the soil under the sea of grass,” she imagines a scenario where she will see them again, “they will know [she] was happy, that [the Mormons] were sorry for the wrongs and have asked for forgiveness. And [they] can all be together in God’s love” (387). Significantly, though, such sentiment, while idealistic and compatible with the master narrative of Mormonism, fails to take into account how the rest of the novel pursues the historical sublime. Indeed, as each character revisits the past through memory or rumor, the unfathomable sublimity lingers as a reminder that justice remains to be served in the present. Silence, in a sense, acquires a voice as efforts to speak about the massacre, though villainized by the text, work together to constitute a subversive current that creates a desire for “ethical action” in readers who find the novel’s transcendental resolution dissatisfying.

Judith Freeman’s *Red Water* (2002) takes an altogether different approach. Set entirely in the aftermath of the massacre, the novel focuses on the lives of three of John D. Lee’s plural wives—Emma, Ann, and Rachel—and devotes distinct sections of the novel to each of them. (A fourth section depicting the execution of John D. Lee precedes them.) Like *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass*, it seeks to end the silence surrounding Mountain Meadows, but rather than doing so with an expectation of forgiveness and an appeal to the transcendental, this novel foregrounds the historical sublime in order to address the ethics of this silence as well as the power structures that sustain it. In the novel, for instance, history functions as an absent presence in the way it intertwines with silence. Emma, an English woman Lee marries soon after the massacre, learns quickly after her arrival in Southern Utah “not to ask too many questions” about Mountain Meadows, even though she has been assured by Lee and others that the massacre was an “Indian Depredation” and not the actions of the Mormons (31-32, 38). She observes, nevertheless, that the “brethren in the colonies” remained “tight-lipped and anxious” about what happened, and the

women refused to “meet [her] eye when they spoke of the lamentable affair and turned [her] questions aside with the standard reply, that it was a thing best forgotten, the sooner, the better.”

(38) When Emma learns further details about the massacre, including rumors about Mormon involvement, she does not believe them, regarding it as “unthinkable” that “our men, our brethren, would willfully murder innocent men, women, and children” (78).

The silence surrounding Mountain Meadows, however, comes to “haunt [her] life,” its invisible presence materializing not only in rumors and whispers, but also in the traumatized “muteness” of the surviving children and the pillaged goods of the massacre victims (85, 98). Indeed, the more she learns about the massacre, the more she discerns its silent imprint on the land and its people:

Slowly, over the years, an erosion had occurred. The massacre of the Arkansas emigrants not only had branded the hearts and minds of those men and boys who had been involved but had also shamed those Saints who had not even been there that day and instilled a searing sense of guilt in everyone. It was as if those events had even poisoned the land itself. The very atmosphere of this brute red world seemed impregnated with sorrow and evil, colored by all the innocent blood shed that day, and this had brought forth a scavenging coarse nature in those otherwise not inclined to brutishness. (146)

Ironically, treating the massacre as a “thing best forgotten” to preserve the community and keep it unified is not enough to staunch this “searing sense of guilt in everyone.” As Emma notes, this collective guilt brings “a wild spirit [into] the settlement, a breakdown of the reigning social order, so different from the [...] new social order” of utopian communitarianism being preached by the leaders in Salt Lake City (146). Rather than fostering unity, it fractures it.

For Emma and the other Mormon characters, coping with the guilt of the massacre often involves breaking the silence, but still framing it within a master narrative that casts it as an episode of divine retribution. While largely silent about the atrocity, Lee at times justifies “the unfortunate affair in the meadow” with the doctrine of blood atonement, which teaches that “if a man is walking a path of sin and does not veer from his course, then it is incumbent upon a believer to stay his decline into hell by relieving him of the burden of his life” (81). In this belief he is joined by Isaac Haight, another leader in the massacre, who teaches Elizabeth, his wife, that “if the Lord requires blood atonement to accomplish his purpose here on earth, then His agents shall be ready at hand” (80). Emma herself, while reluctant to believe that Mormons carried out the murders, acquires the view that there is no “world without vengeance” when the righteous exist to “right the wrongs” of a wicked society (98). Furthermore, Lee teaches her that it is “not enough for [Mormons] to be adapters”; they need to be “controllers”: “It is God’s will for us to be so. We are the finishers of nature” (99). For Emma, therefore, the massacre makes sense only after her religion becomes “a warfare” that “finally would overthrow all opposition.” “Christ was coming very soon,” she believes, and “the only way to be saved [is] to be adopted into the great family of polygamists and strictly follow their examples. And to strike down one’s enemies with vengeance” (100). In each of these examples, the massacre is justified because it fits within a master narrative that understands history as a battle between the righteous and the wicked, where God sanctions vengeance, and perceived opposition to God’s people warrants destruction. Rachel, another of Lee’s wives, perhaps puts the need for this framework best when she states, “Without an understanding of context, [...] it’s impossible to explain these events.” (289)

Significantly, Emma relies on this master narrative not because she necessarily believes that Lee’s account of the massacre is true, but because she “wishe[s] to believe it.” Echoing

Hannah in *The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass*, she states, “Whether it is true or not, I still do not know. And in many ways, it doesn’t matter.” For her, what matters is that the massacre is best comprehended through a belief that Lee was “moved by [...] faith to commit acts only God understands” (147-148). This wish, however, raises the possibility that other frames of understanding exist outside of the master narrative, thus foregrounding the master narrative as one way—among many—to make sense of history and repress the terrifying meaningfulness of the historical sublime. Indeed, like silence, master narratives provide the Mormons in *Red Water* with means to construct boundaries between themselves and the “What Actually Happened” at Mountain Meadows. Rather than a “massacre,” it becomes the work of “vengeance” of a persecuted people, a “blood atonement” that satisfies the wrath of an angry God. However, the unknowability of the past—implicit both in Emma’s question of whether Lee’s version of the massacre “is true or not” and in the novel’s attention to the contradictory evidence of rumors, journals, memoirs, and other forms of historical documentation—invites readers to contemplate the limitations of these means for bringing order to a chaotic past and repressing its cry for ethical action.

Red Water, therefore, as a testimony to the futility of these means, is a critique of power structures that manipulate what we know about the past to construct self-serving narratives. Emma believes that it is necessary “to set down [her] narrative” as “a record of the truth” in order to countermand the “many falsehoods [that] have attached themselves to [her] husband’s name.” However, the “wayward chronology” she uses to “witness to the events of the past” does not prove, as she hopes, that “Heaven is the only true reality and the world is but a tale;” rather, it shows that “true reality” is a matter of subjective perception, a haphazard construct that is influenced, among other things, by the power individuals acquire through constructing master

narratives and enforcing codes of silence (29). Emma, after all, realizes early that “silence is power” as much in a polygamous home as in a broader community. “[O]ur whole lives are composed of such interplays” of power, she discovers, “and [...] the only true subject of men’s intercourse is the subject of power—not love, not hate, but power, which in the end always prevails” (320). Indeed, by compromising with power, and becoming complicit in what its silence covers up, Emma foregrounds the abuses that happen when power uses master narratives to repress the historical sublime and silence subversive counter-narratives. In this way, her story in *Red Water* creates an enclave for readers to contemplate the dangers of such power structures and find ways to change them.

IV.

Because the Mountain Meadows massacre shares its 11 September anniversary with the 2001 terrorist attacks, another religiously-motivated act of terror, it has acquired new relevance for the twenty-first century. The parallels between the two attacks, in fact, provide an obvious subtext for *September Dawn* (2007), the recent film about the massacre, which several reviewers interpreted as a graphic allegory of Islamic extremism. For instance, Kyle Smith of the *New York Post* called the movie “more September 11 porn;” J. Hoberman of *The Village Voice* noted the film’s “jihad comparison;” and conservative reviewer Michael Medved of *USA Today* complained that “[t]he film’s deliberately drawn analogy between Mountain Meadows and 9/11” only illustrates Hollywood’s refusal to condemn “contemporary Muslims who perpetrate unspeakable brutalities every day[.]” As both the film and its reviewers suggest, the massacre continues to elicit strong emotions and polarizes individuals because of the way it offers contemporary audiences a past episode through which to reopen new and existing wounds,

explore traumatic continuities between past and present, and engage and even respond to their present hurt.

The Wine-Dark Sea of Grass and *Red Water* show, however, that the Mountain Meadows Massacre is not simply a historical inroad for understanding religious extremism and terrorism. As works of commentary on the orthodox Mormon historical master narrative, they suggest positive alternatives to the assimilationist post-utopian policies that have long made the massacre a taboo subject in Mormon communities. Significantly, since their publication—and the publication of several non-fictional works on the massacre—the LDS Church has opened its archives to historians in an efforts to be more forthright about the massacre. While this gesture has not entirely pacified its critics, many of whom would like a formal apology and admission of guilt from the Church, it signals the possibility of future changes to the orthodox history that will be better able to account for the massacre in the grand scheme of things. For Mormons like Hans Mattsson, such changes would no doubt be welcome. In his interview with the *New York Times*, to be sure, Mattsson claims that he does not “want to hurt the church,” but rather “just want[s] the truth.” If what Mattsson is asking for is not the absolute “truth” of “What Actually Happened,” which is lost to the historical sublime, but instead an acknowledgement that the orthodox history he learned throughout his life is not the only Mormon narrative available to believers and non-believers alike, then he perhaps has a chance, like O. Kirkham, to make peace with his doubts. Indeed, if historical novels about the Mountain Meadows massacre tell us anything, it is that while the ambiguities of what we know (and do not know) about the past have the potential to shake the very foundations of our lives, they also have ways of opening up space for meaning and peace.

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¹ Sanders notes: "Sandra Gustafson uses the term *ideological edifice* in reference to 'the "official nationalism" of the cold war,' but the term also described the way the Mormon Church has created a version of history that omits or modifies controversial events and practices" (93).

² Initially, to be sure, practitioners of the New Mormon History met with success and even received cautious approval from the LDS hierarchy. Looking to reorganize and reform the Church Historian Office, N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the Church's First Presidency consulted with Arrington and professional historians in the late 1960s. In 1972, Arrington became the official Church historian, a responsibility that had previously belonged solely to general church authorities rather than trained historians. During his tenure as Church Historian, Arrington and his associates, most notably Davis Bitton and James B. Allen, provided grants for Mormon history projects, enabled researchers to have greater access to the Church's hitherto archives, pursued an ambitious oral history project, and published twenty books and more than 350 articles, book chapters, and reviews (Walker, *Mormon History* 68). Bitton, Arrington's Assistant Church Historian, characterized this time as "euphoric" and "heaven-sent," calling it "Camelot" for its almost utopian climate of academic freedom and openness (13).

This climate did not last long, however. After ten years as Church Historian, Arrington, along with his staff, were released from their Church History Division responsibilities after a conservative faction in the LDS leadership, led by influential senior apostles and former US Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, became uncomfortable with the New Mormon History's approach (Walker 65-68, Bitton 16-19). In 1982, Arrington and part of his staff were move to Brigham Young University, and a non-historian was installed as Church Historian. (Walker 68).

Perhaps the most enduring expression of this longing for more faith-promoting history came from Elder Boyd K. Packer, then a junior apostle under Benson, whose implied criticisms of the New Mormon History in a 1981 speech to LDS educators gave voice to the anxieties many of the opponents of the New Mormon History felt at the time. In his speech, Packer, himself a former educator in the LDS Church Education System, spoke against "historians who are Latter-day Saints [that] write history as they were taught in graduate school, rather than as Mormons." The Lord, he warned, directed the Church, and historians who "[did] not keep this constantly in mind" were in danger of becoming lost "in the world of intellectual and scholarly research" "Your objective," he told educators and historians, "should be that [students] will see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now" (261). More specifically, he cautioned them against the notion that there could be "an accurate or objective history of the Church" written without attention to "the Spirit" or divine aspect of Mormonism (262). "Church history," he argued, was a "very powerful tool indeed for building faith," but could become a "faith destroyer" if it were "not properly written or properly taught" from faith-affirming perspectives. "Some things that are true," he famously stated, "are not very useful" (263). Individuals of faith needed to be eased into history, he believed, and Mormon historians could not afford "to be objective, impartial, and scholarly" about the Mormon past since doing so could "unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary." "In the Church we are not neutral," he argued. "We are one-sided. There is a war going on, and we are engaged in it. It is a war between

good and evil, and we are belligerents defending the good” (267). Scholars employed by the Church who were not building faith, but rather “accomodat[ing] the enemy” by separating the Church from a divine context, were “traitor[s] to the cause” (269).

In the culturally conservative 1980s, Packer’s speech appealed to many within the Church, including historians and other scholars, who had grown weary of the subversive countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s and longed for the stability of a metanarrative that awarded those who did not rock the proverbial boat. Still others, however, took issue with Packer’s approach to history and challenged him directly and indirectly in academic forums. James L. Clayton, for example, then Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Utah, published an essay shortly after Packer’s speech entitled “Does History Undermine Faith?” which, while never mentioning Packer by name, argued against Packer’s advocacy of “[d]eliberately taking a one-sided approach to history,” believing that it “violate[d] [...] the very essence of the historical craft, which emphasizes honesty, objectivity, and a willingness to tell the truth” (34). For Clayton the entire approach to teaching pious, “uplifting” history was ultimately detrimental to their faith, and he compared it to “building a house without a roof.” “The rain will fall whether we like it or not,” he argued. Wise religious instructors, therefore, served people best when they prepared them to “face the underside of life, not to hide from it” when it caught them unawares (35). In this, he was seconded by another New Mormon historian, D. Michael Quinn, who asked in another essay, published some years after Packer’s essay, “Why does the well-established and generally respected LDS church today need a protective, paranoid approach to its history that the embattled early Mormons did not manifest?” (85). In his opinion, “[t]he accommodation history practiced by some LDS writers [...] intended to protect the Saints, but actually disillusion[ed] them and ma[de] them vulnerable” (86). Specifically, he was wary of the approach advocated by Packer to “affirm that ‘the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.’” For him, “there are compelling reasons why Mormons should consider alternative explanations as well” (80).

³ The only novel in the series exempt from these disruptions is *Pillar of Fire* (1990), the first volume, which contains no textual-historical notes whatsoever. Beginning in the second volume, *Like a Fire is Burning* (1991), Lund includes individual chapter note at the end of the novel, and beginning in the third volume, *Truth will Prevail* (1992), Lund includes these notes at each chapter’s end.

⁴ According to Richard H. Cracroft, *Pillar of Fire*, the first volume of *The Work and the Glory* series, “sold more than 200,000 copies, which, according to Lavina Fielding Anderson, is “a phenomenal record for Mormon publishers where print-runs of 5,000 or less for fiction are comparatively standard” (Anderson 370). Elsewhere, Cracroft notes that the series as a whole has sold “nearly 3 million copies” (Cracroft 234).

⁵ Similar claims appear in David Cowart’s *History and the Contemporary Novel* (1989), Elisabeth Wesseling *Writing History As a Prophet* (1991), Amy J. Elias’ *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960s Fiction* (2001), Samuel Cohen’s *After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s* (2009), Jerome de Groot’s *The Historical Novel* (2010), Lubomír Doležel’s *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History: The Postmodern Stage* (2010), and Eric L. Berlatsky’s *The Real, The True, and the Told: Postmodern Historical Narrative and the Ethics of Representation* (2011).

⁶ White is “inclined to think” that the sublime is the only way for history to engage in a “visionary politics” effectively, although there is a sense in the essay that other approaches have at least the veneer of politicality. One such approach would be Marxism, which White dismisses as anti-utopian for the way “it shares with its bourgeois counterpart the conviction that history is not a sublime spectacle but a comprehensible process, the various parts, stages, epochs, and even individual events of which are transparent to a consciousness endowed with the means to make sense of it in one way or another.” Nevertheless, despite his rejection of Marxism’s historical approach, White admits that Marxism is at least “radical” as a “social philosophy” and “critique of capitalism” (129).

⁷ Of the metahistorical romance’s political potential, Elias notes that it seeks to represent the historical sublime as “the realm of terror, of chaos, but also the realm of potential revelation. But it also refuses the modernist flight from history; it is highly politicized art. Its secular-sacred [i.e. sublime] conception of History is indeed deeply problematic and easily subject to ideological abuse even as it offers the West a new (or old) possible relation to the past” (55).

⁸ This number remains imprecise. Walker, Turley, and Leonard note that the Fancher-Baker company was comprised of two large companies that joined together in Salt Lake City, along with others they acquired along the trail. They numbered around 120, but only three-fourths of them have been identified by historians (103).

⁹ See, for example, Joseph Fielding Smith’s history of the massacre in *Essentials in Church History* (1922) (511-517).

¹⁰ For Brooks, writing in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Mountain Meadows was less about any inherent evil in Mormonism, which had been a major theme in earlier histories, than it was about the evils of war itself. As she writes at the end of her narrative:

Perhaps when all is finally known, the Mountain Meadows Massacre will be a classic study in mob psychology or the effects of war hysteria. It seems to be a clear case of how a group, stirred and angered by reports perhaps only half true, frenzied by mistaken zeal to protect their homes and families and to defend their church, were led to do what none singly would have done under normal conditions, and for which none singly can be held responsible. A careful study of the lives of the participants will show that they were not highwaymen or murderers normally; they were sober and industrious folk, deeply religious, superstitious perhaps, but unquestionably loyal to their church. To understand how such men as these could bring themselves to take part in such an atrocity may be to understand also war crimes of more recent occurrence. (161)

¹¹ This is not altogether surprising. In the nineteenth-century, historian Leopold Von Ranke famously sought to write history as it “as it actually happened” (“*wie es eigentlich gewesen*”). In the twentieth-century, however, historians of the influential French *nouvelle histoire*, and the more global New History movement, rejected this approach because the polyglot nature of the historical record suggested that objectivity was impossible and, in many ways, undesirable (Elias 31). Interestingly, though, writers of Mormon history, including those of the so-called New Mormon History, who largely embraced the approach of the New History movement, have long maintained a standard (if not practice) of objectivity in order to avoid accusations of having an apologetic or anti-Mormon agenda.

Chapter Five

More than a “Subspecies of American Literature”?:

Obstacles towards a Transnational Mormon Novel

“[P]erhaps most Mormon literature still is American in some sense.”—Bruce W. Jorgensen,
1974

I.

Literary critics, in general, have been indifferent towards the future of Mormon literature. In *The American Religion* (1992), however, Harold Bloom begins his analysis of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with what seems to be at once a magnanimous compliment to the Mormon people and a prophecy about the future of their literature:

A major American poet, perhaps one called a Gentile by the Latter-day Saints, some time in the future will write their early story as the epic it was. Nothing else in all of American history strikes me as *materia poetica* equal to the early Mormons, to Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Parley and Orson Pratt, and the men and women who were their followers and friends. (79)

Setting aside the fact that the “early story” of the Mormons had already been written “as the epic it was” by two moderately successful American poets—Vardis Fisher (*Children of God*, 1939) and Orson Scott Card (*Saints*, 1983)—Bloom’s “prophecy” is interesting not so much for its (perhaps glib) attention to Mormon literature or the apparent intrinsic poetry of the Mormon past, but rather in the way it assumes that the future author of the early Mormon story will be an American telling an American story. Did Bloom not consider that the early Mormon story—

assuming there was *only* one—perhaps had a more global setting than the stock images of Mormon pioneers in ox-drawn wagons and rickety handcarts usually suggest? Did he not realize that that story—or a much broader one—could be told just as well by a “major poet” whose ties to the United States are minimal at best?

Probably not—and understandably so. As a movement that emerged in upstate New York during the Second Great Awakening, Mormonism seems almost indivisible from its American beginnings and strong doctrinal and folkloric traditions about the role of the United States in God’s eternal plan. Even so, Mormons have always been global players—so much so that while they migrated westward across the nineteenth-century United States, their missionaries ventured forth to carry out the “titanic design [...] to convert the nation and the world” (Bloom 94). And while Mormon policy was initially to encourage these converts to immigrate to the American “Zion,” such action was not always practical, and policies about gathering converts to the United States actually changed gradually around the turn of the twentieth century. As early as 1890, for example, Mormon officials were instructing missionaries to discourage immigration in order to strengthen Mormon communities in other parts of the United States and the world (Arrington 139-140). Since then, Mormonism’s international presence has grown significantly. In 1950, for example, the Mormon Church had a mere 7.7 percent of its 1.1 million church members living beyond American borders. By 2008, that number had jumped to nearly 50 percent of 13.5 million church members, with Mormons living in some 170 countries or territories around the world (Allen xxiv).

But even with this impressive international growth, the perception remains—both in- and outside of the church—that Mormonism is a system deeply intertwined with the United States. In fact, according to one story, perhaps apocryphal but much-circulated in Mormon circles, the

Russian novelist Leo Tolstoi once allegedly proclaimed Mormonism to be “the *American* religion” because of the democratic way its “principles teach the people not only of Heaven and its attendant glories, but how to live so that their social and economic relations with each other are placed on a sound basis” (Yates 94).¹ Others have made similar observations throughout the twentieth century, making the apparent indivisibility of Mormonism and America a common theme of studies of the sect. As historian Ethan Yorgason notes, Mormonism is often characterized as “the quintessential American religion” based on claims about its numerical presence in America, American origins, apparent distinctiveness from imported Protestant traditions, and apparent embrace of “basic American values, ideologies, and practices” (142-144). This characterization, no doubt, is only fostered by the relative paucity of studies about Mormonism’s international presence and history.² This has certainly been the case in Mormon literary studies. For instance, while the theme of the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters was “Going Forth into All the World: Mormon Literature in an International Church,” participants were as likely—if not more likely—to present and hear papers about the novels of Cornelia Paddock or Mormon-themed American video games as they were about Italian-American Mormon poet Alex Caldiero or the “Mormon diaspora.”³

Explanations for why more attention has not been paid to transnational issues are many, including the relatively small number of scholars working in the field of Mormon literary studies, a general unfamiliarity with Mormon literature’s historic treatment of international Mormonism, and the fact that Mormon literary works have struggled in the past to move beyond Americentric narratives. Indeed, anthologies of Mormon literature since the 1970s have largely privileged stories by and about American Mormons—particularly American Mormons in Utah—a tendency that has bothered some critics. In 1974, for example, critic Bruce W. Jorgensen took

issue with the editors of *A Believing People*, the first modern Mormon literary anthology, for “implicitly [defining] Mormon literature as a subspecies of American literature.”⁴ Citing Mormonism’s increasingly international presence, he reasoned that while “most Mormon literature still [was] American in some sense [...] it would profit [Mormons] to have an anthology that reflected” the voices of a world church (51). Since then there has been no shortage of follow-ups to *A Believing People*, yet they remain dominated by works of North American writers whose interests and concerns often play out against a canvas of irrigation imagery, red rock, ranching, and other aspects of rural and contemporary Utah Mormon life. If transnational Mormon experiences occur at all in these anthologies, they generally occur within the framework of missionary labor—the one exception to this rule being the stories in the Portuguese-language anthology of Brazilian Mormon fiction, *Aquilo que Nos Move: Os Melhores Contos do Concurso Parley P. Pratt de Contos Mórmons*, 2010, a compilation of best short stories produced for the Parley P. Pratt Mormon Short Story Contest.⁵

Mormon novels, to be sure, have generally addressed transnational themes and international situations better than the shorter works that have appeared in anthologies. Nephi Anderson’s *Added Upon* (1898), one of the earliest Mormon novels, takes place in the United States and Norway, while his *The Castle Builder* (1901) and *A Daughter of the North* (1915) take place exclusively or almost exclusively in Norway. Since then, countless Mormon novels have depicted Mormonism throughout the globe—often, but not exclusively, from the context of missionary work, tourism, or American military service. This chapter seeks to examine how a selection of these novels has represented non-U.S. settings and depicted transnational Mormon experiences. More specifically, though, it explores the Mormon novel’s struggle to find its footing outside of and/or beyond the context of the U.S. challenge of assimilation. It seems

reasonable to assume, after all, that if the post-utopian work of the Mormon novel involves negotiating the paradoxical desire for assimilation and utopia in order to engage broader cultural landscapes and rearticulate Mormon cultural boundaries, then extending the scope of the Mormon novel to address matters of transnational community, global citizenship, and non-U.S. assimilation seems more of an extension or broadening of traditional concerns than an entirely new direction. Still, as currently constituted, the Mormon novel, for reasons I will outline below, seems reticent to take bigger transnational leaps. This chapter seeks to identify obstacles to these leaps as well as examine how certain novels have tried to negotiate these obstacles via transnational utopian enclaves that address questions of colonialism and global community; religious orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy; and intercultural exchanges (via the Mormon missionary program and other sites of exchange). It also addresses ways these novels have sometimes embraced and sometimes resisted the hegemonic narrative(s) of American Mormonism in order to reaffirm, reconsider, and even revise long-standing assumptions about the value of boundaries and central gathering places that have traditionally defined Mormonism's physical, cultural, and ideological landscapes. Accordingly, this chapter pays special attention to ways the Mormon novel functions as an imaginative site where questions and dilemmas about global(izing) Mormonism and its Zion vision can be worked out ethically towards utopian ends. It also foregrounds the failures of this site—its limits in rendering a view of transnational Mormonism that captures the many hearts and many minds of a global community.

II.

Interestingly, while Mormon novelists struggle to take the transnational leap, other American novelists—including many from ethnic, marginalized, and minority backgrounds—seem less hesitant. As critic Rachel Adams notes (2007), “a constellation” of American novelists

in recent years have been moving in transnational directions by resisting the “stylistic and conceptual premises of high postmodernism” and focusing instead on “the intensification of global processes” that have developed over the last half-century, particularly since the dissolution of the Cold War (250).⁶ Using Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) as a model, Adams argues that contemporary American fiction is in the process of moving beyond an aesthetic derived from Cold War politics and paranoia—typical of the works of Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo—towards a trend that Adams calls “American literary globalism.” According to Adams, this American literary globalism builds upon certain conventions of postmodernism, yet has an entirely “new set of genealogical, geographic, and temporal referents,” including an interest in global politics, multiethnic perspectives, geopolitical cleavages and tensions, border crossings, national and transnational relations, economic flows, and polyvocality (see Adams 261-265). For Adams, this literary globalism opens up a “shared perception of community whereby, for better or worse, populations in one part of the world are inevitably affected by events in another” (268).

Looking at the Mormon novel as currently constituted, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Mormon novelists have embraced “American literary globalism” as Adams defines it, or even a kind of “Mormon literary globalism” subspecies. As noted earlier, transnational concerns have always had a place in U.S. Mormon novels since the late nineteenth century, yet these works hardly constitute a majority within the still-developing genre.⁷ Furthermore, additional obstacles, deeply entrenched in Mormon culture and doctrine, exist that fail to incentivize Mormon novels to invest in global stories or explore the transnational. For instance, unique Mormon scripture establishes America as the future home of the New Jerusalem (see Ether 13:1-12; D&C 57:1-2; Articles of Faith 1:10), and Mormon leaders throughout the twentieth century

employed these teachings towards more nationalistic ends, often as post-utopian catalysts for greater assimilation into mainstream America. Indeed, as historian Ethan Yorgason observes, Mormonism's early-twentieth century abandonment of its "strong millennial expectations of retreat from the world"—a key component of the post-utopian condition—enabled "a nearly axiomatic jingoism" to surface, which replaced the nuance of the Church's nineteenth-century stance on "national loyalty" that had allowed for and even encouraged a "capacity for critique" of the American government. This jingoism ultimately led many Mormons, including several influential leaders, to "see the American nation as an active agent in spreading God's agenda, rather than just an entity providing place and protection for the church to grow" (144). For instance, Ezra Taft Benson, a member of the Church's governing Quorum of the Twelve who served as Eisenhower's Secretary of Agriculture (1953-1961) and later as Church President (1985-1994), wrote extensively about America's place as both Zion and the Book of Mormon's Promised Land, often blending these teachings with his American exceptionalist views.⁸ In his 1974 book *God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties*—essentially a compilation of his political sermons from the 1960s—Benson characterized the United States as "the Lord's base of operations" and cast America's Founding Fathers as men who were divinely foreordained to establish the Constitution and leave "a legacy of liberty" that would prepare the world for Christ's Second Coming (325-26).⁹ Under the influence of such rhetoric, mid-century Mormons came to believe that they were "spreading the gospel of Americanism as much as that of Mormonism" (Yorgason 144). Over time, Mormons even acquired a reputation for being "models of patriotic, law-abiding citizenship, sometimes seeming to 'out-American' all other Americans" (Mauss 22).

This Americentrism persists among American Mormons today, thanks in part to the enduring popularity of Benson's mid-century teachings¹⁰ and the rise of Mormons like Glenn Beck, whose conservative media empire has aggressively propagated the jingoistic works of W. Cleon Skousen, another mid-century Mormon-American exceptionalist (Rees 11-12). To a certain extent, this attitude is only rarely echoed by high-ranking Church leaders today, who seem more guarded about expressing views on America's divine role in God's plan, often softening their nationalistic rhetoric or doing away with it entirely to emphasize the Church's world-wide growth. Even so, while Church expansion has led Mormons to rearticulate Zion "to include all Saints in all lands," and to think of "Zion" as anywhere in the world where God's people are gathered, America remains very much at the center place of Mormonism as "the most important, the most blessed—the capital of Zion itself" (Lunceford 51). By privileging the United States as a "Promised Land" in this way, American Mormons have tended to reify national borders and create a sense that the United States is the standard to which all other nations should aspire, thus generating a sense that the United States is perhaps of more interest to Mormons—and Mormon readers—than other lands. For those wishing to write about Mormonism as a global phenomenon rather than an American church, this could pose a problem.

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles facing the development of a transnational Mormon fiction, however, is the question of representing the global Mormon experience itself, particularly when those likely doing the representing are white Mormon Americans whose experience with the broader world may be limited to two years' worth of missionary service in a relatively confined and localized area in the world. Indeed, postcolonial theorists have long resisted and challenged similar efforts among Western writers to depict non-Western lives and cultures because of the way these efforts often exoticize these lives and cultures, enlisting them

in kinds of Western fantasies. In his classic essay of postcolonial theory “An Image of Africa” (1975), for example, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe famously identifies a “desire” or “need” in the West “to set Africa up as a foil in Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (783). Edward Said, in his foundational book *Orientalism* (1979), proposes something similar when he suggests that Western representations of the Middle East tend to construct an “Orient” that “help[s] to define Europe (or the West)” as something apart from and superior to non-Western cultures and peoples (1-2). In both instances, representation is a device through which the representer can claim control and a privileged position over the represented, and thus define its “Self” against an “Other.” For Achebe, particularly, this tendency betrays the West’s “deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization” and its fear about its “physical and moral deformities” peeking through its “erect and immaculate” mien (792).

To a certain extent, this happens in transnational Mormon fiction, particularly in texts with strong nationalistic layers that privilege the history and experience of white American Mormons over everyone else. Missionary fiction, particularly, shows evidence of this tendency in the way it typically explores the tensions arising from American Mormons’ interactions with non-American, non-Mormon peoples and cultures. A look at recent examples of the subgenre—Coke Newell’s *On the Road to Heaven* (2007), Douglas Thayer’s *The Tree House* (2008), S. P. Bailey’s *Millstone City* (2012), and Ryan McIlvain’s *Elders* (2013)—shows that these novels largely explore transnational tensions and interactions through a decidedly American lens, often viewing anything non-American as either convert material or alienating and potentially hostile. For instance, in *On the Road to Heaven*, a kind of Mormon homage to the works of Jack

Kerouac, protagonist Elder Kit West describes stepping off the airplane in Colombia by emphasizing the threatening nature of the land and its people:

But as I entered the stairwell [of the airplane], the Colombian air hit me in the face, and I thought I was going to suffocate on the heat and humidity. I actually had to cough. As I cleared the stairwell, there stood the Colombian greeting line, each of the men spitting on our shoes as we filed between them. The tall one looked at each of us in turn and said, "Go home, *gringos*."

I got the vague suspicion they didn't like us. (185)

This image of the gauntlet-like "Colombian greeting line" foreshadows one of the novel's major transnational tensions, Kit's experience with anti-Americanism, which mystifies him and awakens in him a dormant nationalistic fervor. Uncomfortable as the Other, he comes to picture himself at the mercy of hostile terrain: "a lonely American kid a long way from mom, home, and apple pie" (242-243).

Kit's feelings of fear, alienation, and isolation no doubt reflect those of many American Mormon missionaries, which is probably why these feelings are so prevalent in missionary fiction. At the same time, however, they also continue a tradition within the missionary fiction subgenre of presenting the world beyond the United States as something strange, backwards, and hostile. Later in *On the Road to Heaven*, in fact, Newell offers an extreme example of this presumed hostility of the Other when Kit, an avowed pacifist before his mission, becomes momentarily violent after a Colombian college student hits him over the head with a heavy textbook. Frustrated after nearly two years of being spit upon, berated, and called names like "son of a whore," "Yankee exploiter," and "capitalist pig," Kit lashes out in a way that is inconsistent with his message of peace, leaving the college student sobbing and bleeding on the

ground (275). It is a horrifying scene, not only because of the violence, but also because of the way Kit (and the text) smugly refuses to recognize how his brutal reaction to the Colombian's obvious resentment only validates the anti-Americanism so often directed at him. Rather than trying to understand the motives behind the Colombians' hostility, Kit allows himself to become the very thing he says he's not: an American bully. In the end, he even refuses to take responsibility for his violent actions, blaming them instead on his experience in Colombia. "Sorry, man," he tells the student, "it's been a long two years" (309).

Kit's reaction to the Colombian student is but an extreme example of Mormon fiction's tendency to portray non-American lands and their inhabitants as hostile and dangerous, the antithesis of America and the safety it promises; the disturbing scene, nevertheless, is indicative of the problems that go with presenting the non-American, often non-white Others or Other-lands from the perspective of a visitor, a transplant who may speak the language but not understand the culture. What readers get in novels like *On the Road to Heaven* is a representation of a foreign land that is heavily mediated through the naïve eyes of a young white (often male) American Mormon. Rarely do readers of Mormon fiction get the counterpoint: transnational stories that ask them to tread a foreign landscape that is as commonplace to its characters as Utah is to the characters in a Douglas Thayer or Levi Peterson novel. To borrow from Achebe, this Americentric tendency in Mormon missionary novels suggests, perhaps, not only a "deep anxiety about the precariousness" of the American Mormon's place in global church, but also an effort to use the genre to assert the American Mormon's role as a cultural mediator, a privileged voice whose American accent signals something transcendent and universal (see 792).

In theory, of course, the transnational Mormon novel, along with its missionary subgenre, can function as something other than the expression of American-Mormon anxiety about the

diminishing hegemonic grip of the American over the global church. Indeed, if the Mormon novel is, as this study suggests, a normative (or normalizing) site where Mormons are able to work out their suppressed utopian energies, then attempts to question Mormon Americentrism or imagine the church as a less centralized (or even decentralized) transnational system through the novel would not only participate in the post-utopian project, but also work to liberate the project from its traditional American context within the challenge of assimilation. Unfortunately, as works like *On the Road to Heaven* and others indicate, the Mormon novel struggles—if not fails—to imagine Mormonism as a community without borders, suggesting, perhaps, that the genre currently occupies an anxious, reactionary stance to—if not, in some cases, a denial of—the globalization of the church and its increasingly non-American majority. At the same time, however, the Mormon novel is not without a number of works—some quite old—that incorporate or propose alternative views: transnational utopian enclaves that endeavor to imagine a future where Mormonism is less tied to bordered concepts like *nation*, *state*, and *America*, and more open to mutually beneficial border crossings and cultural exchanges. While these enclaves are not altogether unproblematic or free of Americentric assumptions, a look at how four Mormon novels use them to imagine possible paths for transnational Mormonism reveals much about the potential of the genre itself for extending its post-utopian concerns beyond the largely American concerns of the challenge of assimilation.

III.

Arguably, all transnational Mormon novels contain utopian enclaves of one kind or another, although, as always, the “utopian” quality of the space is relative and may seem altogether dystopic. In his Norway novels—*Added Upon* (1898), *The Castle Builder* (1901), and *A Daughter of the North* (1915)—and British novels—*The Story of Chester Lawrence* (1913)

and *Romance of a Missionary* (1919)—Nephi Anderson pioneered the use of transnational utopian spaces to imagine Mormonism as a global phenomenon defined by a unique identity independent of nationalistic concerns or political boundaries. When political radical Harald Einersen converts to Mormonism in *The Castle Builder*, for instance, the new faith displaces the fierce nationalism he acquired after his disillusionment from Protestantism, making him more “Mormon” than “Norwegian.” Feeling as if “he had died and had arisen in another sphere,” he abandons his politics and ambitions as a prospective legislator and civil servant and comes to feel liberated from national loyalties and political boundaries, even considering moving to Bergen, Christiania, or the United States so he can gather with “large branches of the Church” (182, 195). For him, Mormonism becomes a utopian space where a transnational Mormon Zion, not nationalism or partisan politics, becomes his primary affiliation. By providing a site where transnational differences and conflicts are mediated through a common set of religious beliefs and practices, it inscribes new boundaries for Harald’s world and reshapes how he sees himself and his national, political, and global affiliations.

Nearly a century later, Margaret Blair Young’s *Salvador* (1993) moves in a somewhat different trajectory, yet ultimately proposes an enclave of its own. Set near the end of Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1992), the novel follows Julie, a recently divorced Mormon from Utah, as she and her parents travel to El Salvador to visit “Zarahemla,” the homestead of her Uncle Johnny and Aunt Louisa. Johnny, a seemingly visionary and idealistic man, runs Zarahemla as a kind of Mormon utopian community, offering “the kind of charity Wall Street doesn’t understand” by providing poor Salvadorans with food, educational opportunities, and “untaxed land” to live on (32). Additionally, he carries out “salvation projects” in nearby towns and villages, including one in an indigenous village called Izalco (22). In contrast to these efforts are those of George

Piggott, the local leader of Mormons in Johnny's area and a former missionary companion to Johnny and Julie's father. A successful American businessman, Piggott lives in an opulent mansion in San Salvador and largely embodies (both in a physical and figurative sense) the hegemonic presence of the American Church as well as the excesses of American capitalism and neo-colonialism. For instance, in his house he employs "Indian maids from Izalco," whom he requires to wear matching blue dresses, a requirement Johnny, a tireless critic of Piggott, believes to be a gross colonial imposition akin to "butchering Indians." As Johnny explains to Julie, "the Indian's costume is her culture. Once a woman wears a dress, she can't return to her *huipil* [traditional clothing]. She loses her way back forever." By removing the maids from their *huipil*, he reasons, Piggott is essentially "[s]laughter[ing] them right and left. In his own front room" (7). Piggott, however, sees himself in a more philanthropic light. Like Johnny, he also operates a planned Mormon community, an urban housing project named "Bountiful," which Julia describes as "a little America" that "look[s] like somebody had misplaced a subdivision of L.A" in the middle of San Salvador. There, Mormon and non-Mormon Salvadoreans live in "pre-fab houses with clover lawns and Volkswagens" and enjoy the luxuries of "disposals and septic tanks." For Piggott, it is the "one thing" in his life that he "wouldn't change" (108).

Critic Robert Bird rightly suggests that *Salvador* is about a "clash of interpretations and of realities" (57). Both Johnny's community and Piggott's are named after important cities in the Book of Mormon, yet each represents an interpretive byproduct of a male colonialist fantasy the men once fostered as young missionaries: "to find [...] some good women and come back here to El Salvador and build Zion" (33). At first glance, Johnny's utopia, with its humble surroundings and show of egalitarianism, seems to be a site of positive transnational exchange that is more in line with the utopian principles of the Book of Mormon and early Mormonism than Piggott's

“pre-fab” homage to suburban America and capitalism. As the novel progresses, however, Zarahemla’s hybrid culture of Mormonism infused with indigenous practices surfaces as an illusion. For Johnny, El Salvador is “tattooed with grace,” the sacred land that Jesus walked upon and sanctified when he visited the Americas in Book of Mormon times (34).¹¹ Furthermore, he is convinced that his Zarahemla is built upon the original site of the Zarahemla in the Book of Mormon, although the book itself gives no indication that such is the case. Rather, it is Johnny’s fanciful and unorthodox interpretation of the Book of Mormon mythos that causes him to see, for example, proof of this claim in a cluster of overgrown Mayan ruins on his property, upon which he imagines Book of Mormon prophets “traipsing over the grounds, praying around, dedicating the place and just waiting for us to figure things out and pay them a visit” (154). Upon it, he has constructed a reality based not on unambiguous scriptural claims, archaeological evidence, or actual cultural nexuses between Mormonism and indigenous culture, but rather on a colonialist fantasy that romanticizes the land and its people to underwrite an ultimately self-serving utopian project. Like Piggott’s blue dresses, Johnny’s attempts to literalize the Book of Mormon enact a kind of colonial violence on the Salvadorans, their history, and culture.¹²

Ultimately, Julie’s familiarity with Mayan history allows her see through and dismantle Johnny’s neo-colonial project, which secretly includes polygamy, blood atonement, and a kind of racial eugenics program designed to turn indigenous Salvadorians into “a white and delightful people” (189). She and her parents ultimately retreat to a “normal Gringo life” in Utah and Mormon orthodoxy, but not before Piggott’s place as the ecclesiastical authority in the region is affirmed and sustained against the heresies of Johnny’s (dys)topian challenge to it (244). *Salvador*, therefore, performs a deeply ambiguous cultural work in its depiction of transnational Mormonism. Neither Johnny nor Piggott presents an unproblematic paradigm for global

Mormonism since both seem paternalistically indifferent to the ways their positions of ecclesiastical authority, Western mores and institutions, and romantic idealism create a hegemonic imbalance that harms those they claim to love and serve. To be sure, Piggott's efforts in El Salvador, particularly Bountiful, are cast in a better light than those of Johnny, perhaps because Piggott's generosity and Mormon orthodoxy seem to do less harm to the Salvadorian people than Johnny's alternatives. Yet, *Salvador*'s treatment of both Johnny and Piggott suggest that the white rule paradigm is ultimately antithetical to the development of a transnational Mormonism based on cultural respect, compassion, and exchange. Such is suggested at least in the novel's final chapter when Julie and her parents visit Izalco before they return to Utah. Here, Izalco provides the novel with its truest transnational utopian enclave, a village where Mormons from Utah and Mormons from El Salvador exchange gifts, participate in Mormon and indigenous prayers and rituals, and communicate brokenly but effectively in shards of three different languages. It sets a foundation for future transnational exchanges and gestures towards a polydox Mormonism without borders and without center.

A more problematic transnational utopian enclave can be found in Toni Sorenson Brown's *Redemption Road* (2006). Like *Salvador*, it is a first-person narrative about a Mormon woman's transnational search for meaning in the aftermath of a traumatic divorce. Lana, the Utah-born narrator, is lapsed in her faith and works in public relations for a popular hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, a job that involves the boundary-crossing task of "creat[ing] a thriving relationship between the hotel and the community" by offering humanitarian service to a school in the city's slums (7). The school, run by a devout Protestant named Mama Grace, is "a pile of rubble on a scrap of bald land" along a street called Redemption Road, a name, like Mama Grace's, that underscores the novel's themes of atonement, forgiveness, and spiritual

reawakening. At the school, Lana becomes attached to Jomo, a seven-year-old orphan from the slums, who goes missing after she buys him a new set of clothes. Much of the novel involves Lana's search for the lost boy, which introduces her to a world of AIDS, poverty, homeless, and human trafficking, but also places her in contact with a congregation of Kenyan Mormons who help with her search and bring her back into the fold. With their help, Jomo is eventually found, albeit dead, in Mombassa, the victim of human trafficking. The discovery is hard for Lana, but eased by her reawakened faith and the support of a transnational, interfaith community, which compels her to "want to give back, to share that love with others" (238).

On the surface, *Redemption Road* is packaged as an inspirational novel with an activist subtext. In the forms of Mama Grace's school, the Mormon congregation in Nairobi, and Lana's community of friends, the novel offers several transnational utopian enclaves that are either overtly Mormon or potentially Mormon. (Mama Grace's school, for example, is not overtly Mormon, but the presence of a bookshelf lined with copies of the Book of Mormon suggests that it soon will be.) These spaces, however, are either overshadowed or compromised by the novel's problematic, western-centric stance towards Africa and its African characters. Following the trope Achebe identifies in "An Image of Africa," for example, its stereotyped depiction of Africa as "a continent stalked by diseases and plagues" presents it as the foil to Lana's Utah homeland. Lana, to be sure, is ambivalent towards Utah, even characterizing it negatively as "a White state" (51), yet she casts her twin sister's Provo home as idyllic in comparison to the poor—even "savage"—living conditions in Nairobi.

Back in Utah in Laura's suburban neighborhood, two-story houses line the streets, and children play on plastic swing sets and carpets of cut green grass. When Laura's children are hungry she jumps in her SUV and drives down the street to a

grocery store stocked with more food than most African children will see in a lifetime [...] Here, in the red dirt streets of Nairobi, children are fortunate if they receive a bowl of *wali*, the Swahili word for rice, or a piece of bread—*bofulo*. Three square meals a day is an unfathomable concept.

Back home, Laura's kids turn on the tap to gorge their bellies with safe drinking water. Here the children drink boiled water fetched from the same rivers and streams where both people and animals wash away their waste. (61)

Complementing this view are further stereotypes that exoticize Africa and play to Western images of Africa as a primitive site of war, barbarism, and suffering. When Lana first meets Jomo, he “whoops and breaks into a furious little warrior dance, turning circles and drumming on his black balloon of a belly” (12). The gang of teenagers who menace Lana throughout the novel are similarly characterized not only by their “hungry and savage” laughter (66), “warrior shriek[s]” (68), “striped and savage” facepaint (232), and “war cr[ies]” (233), but also by their similarities to hyenas (231) and “the deadly growl of a beast” (232). The novel is also highly ambivalent towards blackness and Africans. In one passage, Africans are described as “a flowing river of dark beauty and strength” (207), while in another they remind Lana of parasites and Satan's unseen minions (69).

While it largely lacks the distinct Americentrism of novels like *On the Road to Heaven* (“western-centric” is a better characterization of the novel), *Redemption Road* nevertheless follows another well-established trope in western narratives—particularly activist narratives—by using the experience and suffering of a white western character as a “‘proxy’ resembling the self” to mediate the experience and suffering of the non-white, non-western other (Goldberg 40-41, see Hartman 19). For example, the suffering of Jomo, the Kenyan boy Lana befriends,

remains at a distance from readers until the end of the novel, when Lana learns that he has been kidnapped, sold, and presumably killed by human traffickers. In its place, however, is Lana's own suffering *for* him, beginning with the anxiety she feels over his disappearance, and culminating in the passion play of humiliation, suffering, and physical harm she receives on her way to confront Jomo's teenaged kidnappers in the slums near Mama Grace's school:

I struggle to stand. I'm crying for help, but the fury of the wind rushes at me, blowing my words back at me. A man stands outside of his shanty. I cry out to him, but he only stares at me like I'm an evil spirit.

So that's why no one will help me.

Time passes tortuously slow until my entire body fails me. My knees buckle, and I fall, this time slamming face-first into the slop. I choke. Muck fills my mouth, my nostrils; it coats my eyes. I choke on the waste of Africa's bowels.

The metallic taste of blood fills my mouth. My tooth has cut through my bottom lip. I spit blood. I vomit mud. (229)

Lana's suffering for Jomo by proxy casts her as a kind of Christ figure, a parallel that becomes even more apparent after she is stabbed in the stomach "deep and deadly" by Malik, the leader of the gang of kidnappers.¹³ By drawing this parallel, however, and focusing explicitly on her agony, the novel also distances readers from the suffering of Jomo, thus enacting the kind of "representational violence" theorist Natalie Goldberg identifies in certain western activist narratives. For Goldberg, this violence occurs when these narratives, "unable to sustain the tension between cultural specificity and universal humanity embedded in [their] own protest discourse," retreat to the familiar territory of "western subjectivity as symbol for universal experience" to make their activist plea, thus eliding "the other's suffering" from the narrative in

the process (41). Casting Lana, therefore, as the expiating Christ for Africa's problems, and focusing exclusively on her mental and physical anguish *for* (rather than *from*) these problems, *Redemption Road* redirects its western readers' gaze away from the non-western object of its activist impulse to something more recognizably western, thus minimizing the relevance and potential universality of that non-western object to readers. Indeed, while Lana's victimized body in the final chapter lies wrapped "like a wounded mummy" in bloody bandages, Jomo's brutalized corpse remains markedly absent. In its place, however, is a perfected body, the object of a vision or dream Lana experiences during her recovery. Clean, unscarred, and lacking even the "usual cuts and scrapes" that had characterized Jomo's body before his death, this body only redirects the readers' gaze further from images of non-western suffering, once again underscoring its irrelevance to western audiences and restricting their ability to witness to Jomo's victimization. Like Lana's body, it becomes a proxy for Jomo's real suffering—a faith-affirming balm in the form of an idealized non-western body inscribed with western wish-fulfillment (235).

Redemption Road, therefore, creates a number of transnational utopian enclaves where western problems and values find resolution and affirmation at the expense of the other's visibility. While ostensibly an activist narrative about Africa's myriad problems—AIDS, poverty, corruption, prostitution, human trafficking—it is, more accurately, a fictional conversion narrative that addresses the spiritual redemption of the western self by imperfectly recasting it as the temporal salvation of the suffering other. As Lana contemplates the face of the perfected Jomo, in fact, her one desire is to make him the beneficiary of this redemption. Her plan, after recovery, is to "teach him of the things that matter most" and "take him to church every Sunday" to "learn all about Heavenly Father and Jesus" (236). For her—and the narrative

itself—Mormonism offers a potential framework for a seemingly egalitarian transnational utopia, a means to the end of the societal plagues that contributed to Jomo's death. Even so, the future of the utopian enclave Lana carves out at the end of the novel, while seemingly transnational and progressive, depends upon a kind of universal acceptance to orthodox Mormon principles—the Book of Mormon, Sunday services—making Mormonism less a site of egalitarian transnational exchange (as it is in *Salvador*) than a simple panacea, a self-affirming vehicle for western colonial fantasies about the other's redemption from its otherness.

Perhaps the most recent novel to explore Mormonism's global presence is Ryan McIlvain's *Elders* (2013), a work that pays particular attention to the hegemonic tensions between Mormonism's American headquarters and its presence in the global south. A missionary novel set during the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, it introduces these tensions through the transnational partnering of Elder Passos, a Brazilian from Fortaleza, and Elder McLeod, an American from Boston, who have been assigned to labor together in Minas Gerais, Brazil, a state where "harvests of truly interested investigators [...] were always modest" (27). While temperamentally different and socially incompatible—Passos is serious, ambitious, and often religiously zealous; McLeod is cynical, rebellious, and doubtful about his faith—the two missionaries make an effort to work together after they meet a couple—Leandro and Josefina—who show real interest in their message. From this effort develops a kind of transnational utopian enclave based on mutual respect, expressions of friendship, and other positive cultural exchanges, including the swapping of books in their respective languages as a way to help the other improve his language skills, a gesture that suggests the bridging of communication barriers (71, 127). This enclave is short-lived, however, and breaks down after a major South American soccer championship and the Iraq invasion disrupt their momentum and throw their cultural

differences into sharp relief. Of these two events, the looming invasion proves the most divisive, and, as invasion becomes increasingly more likely, McLeod begins to “[embody] for Elder Passos some of America’s worst tendencies.” He is perceived as “boorish yet haughty, naïve yet cynical, self-righteous despite such obvious cruelty,” traits that ultimately surface when the missionaries’ relationship with Leandro and Josefina sours after Leandro loses interest in their message and, while drunk, accuses McLeod of wanting to sleep with Josefina, an accusation suffused with a transnational subtext (163, 145). For the drunken Leandro, after all, McLeod is a “gringo” who has come to Brazil to “[try] to steal our women” (145). Later, when he repeats the accusation and refuses to let the missionaries into his house to teach Josefina, McLeod turns to violence, burying his “arm [...] elbow deep in Leandro’s stomach” (190). The assault signals the end of the missionaries’ transnational utopian enclave and serves as a catalyst for future breakdowns of understanding. For Passos, particularly, McLeod’s use of force is indicative of “the American way” of doing “diplomacy of the balled-up fist” (191). Indeed, against the backdrop of the Iraq invasion, McLeod’s violent attempt to gain access to Josefina mirrors the Bush administration’s imperial use of military force to occupy Iraq and acquire more control over the region.

McLeod, to be sure, is an unlikely imperialist. An aspiring Ivy Leaguer and student of history and literature, he nowhere in the novel expresses ardent support for the Iraq invasion or betrays any intense patriotism. Like Kit West in *On the Road to Heaven*, he is largely confused by the anti-Americanism he faces and naïve about the historically imperialist position he occupies as an American missionary in the global south. Furthermore, while he responds to this anti-Americanism with some arrogance (see 210), he is too sensitive and introspective to evoke the cowboy abandon generally associated with the Bush administration and its foreign policy.

Far more “imperial” imperialists are McLeod’s fellow American missionaries, Elders Kimball and Sweeney, who hardly socialize with their Brazilian working companions, or Elder Jones, Passos’ first American companion, who considers poor Brazilian missionaries to be “freeloaders” because they are not able to “[foot] the bill” for their missions like their wealthier American counterparts (38). As McLeod’s superior in the mission’s leadership hierarchy, Passos also proves equally violent, arrogant, and cruel, often using his position of responsibility to undermine McLeod’s earnest—if unorthodox—missionary efforts in order to gain favor with the American mission president who supervises the missionary work in the region. Indeed, despite his disgust with McLeod’s “diplomacy of the balled-up fist,” Passos proves that it is not only “the American way” when he catches McLeod seemingly in the act of defacing his shoes and, in response, beats the “entire right side of [McLeod’s] face” until it is “lurid with darkening spots” (288). In reality, McLeod is simply shining them—a kindly gesture designed to restore goodwill to the companionship—making the assault, like McLeod’s assault on Leandro, not only a rash misjudgment and gross imposition of power, but also another obstruction keeping them from recovering their transnational utopian space.

The image of transnational Mormonism in *Elders*, therefore, is as ambiguous as it is ambivalent. While the novel draws certain parallels between Mormonism’s American presence in Brazil and the US Invasion of Iraq, it ultimately refuses to cast transnational Mormonism as an imperial phenomenon defined simply by a strict dialectical tension between an American colonizer and a third-world other. Rather, it looks with ambivalence on McLeod’s place as an American in Brazil, on Passos’ role as a missionary leader with deep anti-American feelings, and on a missionary program that asserts the hegemonic primacy of its message while embracing, as Passos notes, a kind of ironic Marxism in the way it supports all of its missionaries, regardless of

nationality or economic situation, with a “vast communal pot” comprised of monetary donations that are distributed equally to all missionaries (38). Indeed, like Passos, who learned in school about “the bottom-line evils of Reagan and Bush and Clinton and Bush,” only to abandon this absolutist perspective later after he had come to know Americans, the novel adopts the phrase “*Yes, but*” as its “mantra” (38). There is the suggestion in *Elders*, after all, that Elder Passos and those who villainize McLeod for being an American and force him unfairly into the role of imperialist are simply performing a kind of imperial work of their own. Even with this suggestion, however, the novel is hardly a deconstruction of imperial readings of Mormon missionary work. Rather, its attention to imperial work of all kinds simply underscores the complexity of imagining a transnational enclave with a strong American center. Indeed, *Elders* never fully resolves its ambivalent stance towards transnational Mormonism, using ambiguity instead to reveal the possible threats imperial hegemony and nationalistic arrogance pose in the project of Mormonism’s ongoing expansion into the global south and throughout the world—particularly when these threats become barriers to the development of utopian enclaves of transnational exchange.

IV.

As these analyses suggest, Mormon novels have the potential to function as sites where Mormon writer can address the challenges of framing Mormonism within a global context and negotiate the evolving dynamic between the global Mormon community and its American headquarters. Accordingly, these novels have at times taken ambivalent stances towards both the American and international church, embracing and resisting twentieth-century notions of a centralized understanding of Mormonism as an American church with a distinctively American message for the rest of the world. In doing so, they have engaged and even challenged long-

standing assumptions (and anxieties) about the boundaries and gathering places that have historically defined Mormonism's physical, cultural, and ideological landscapes. Indeed, in functioning as imaginative sites where global Mormonism can be worked out towards global utopian ends, including the adaptation of Mormonism to myriad global cultures, these novels demonstrate the relevance of Mormonism's post-utopian project to regions beyond American borders, where questions of Mormon assimilation become, in some ways, even more problematized by questions of cultural hegemony and imperialism. If anything, though, these novels have heretofore fallen short of addressing these questions fully. As *Redemption Road* and *On the Road to Heaven* show, for example, transnational Mormon novels, because of their attention to global Mormonism and utopian change, must be careful in how they promote and project these utopian dreams in order to avoid playing the imperialist unawares. Indeed, the challenge of the transnational Mormon novel seems to be how to avoid constructing utopian enclaves that function simply as another form of colonialist expression that promotes what it takes to be "change" and "social betterment" transnationally while remaining sadly unaware of its own cultural assumptions and prejudices.

How is such avoidance possible, though, when most Mormon novels are being written by white American authors whose transnational ties are decidedly limited? David A. Shuler's thoughts on historical colonialism, international development efforts, and Mormon expansion into developing nations offer some possibilities with application to the transnational Mormon novel. As Shuler notes, "implement[ing] change in a cross-cultural relationship is challenging and can even be dangerous," particularly when "the environment and context within which we initiate change [...] is different from our own and is unfamiliar, or worse, unknown" (273-274). For him, the best way for Mormons—or any people—to promote change in the lives of others is

to “recognize and respect agency” and be “aware of [personal] motives, predispositions, and areas of ignorance.” As Shuler observes:

We must be aware of our impositions, meaning how our cultural values may differ from others we try to help, and how forceful we are, or can be, in influencing their ideas and actions and ultimately their lives. We should question our methods and our assumptions, including any change [to] orthodoxies that have not been humbly and thoughtfully challenged. (281-282)

In its efforts to imagine transnational Mormonism and promote global betterment, therefore, the Mormon novel must reflect constantly on its cultural work and the kind(s) of transnational Mormonism it constructs and promotes through utopian spaces. Furthermore, it must be careful and sensitive in how it layers its post-utopian voice, particularly the part of that voice that speaks back to the Mormon community. It must be mindful, that is, about the way it depicts and appeals to the non-Western Mormon other, whose “cultural values” and “Mormon” identity may be radically different from the values and identities of American Mormons. It must be aware also that giving voice to the other—including the Mormon other—is a problematic endeavor.

To be sure, it is altogether likely that the next one hundred years of Mormon literature will better reflect the recent international growth of the LDS Church, particularly the experiences of those who have grown up in the Mormon faith in international settings and transnational situations. Indeed, considering the recent increase in number of Mormon missionaries, as well as the LDS Church’s soft stance on legal and illegal immigration, it is also possible—if not likely—that even Mormon novels in the United States will begin to be as informed by transnational experiences as the works of writers like Junot Diaz, Edwidge Danticat, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Karen Tei Yamashita. Until then, and even after, Mormon novelists would do well to follow

Malaysian fiction writer Preeta Samarasan, who suggests that appropriations of the Other's voice are not necessarily unethical if they are done with empathy rather than with a desire to force the Other to speak as a puppet. As Samarasan writes, "We don't need fiction to learn to empathize with those who resemble us; the real challenge is to see ourselves—to find those sometimes comforting, sometimes terrifying shared kernels of humanity—in those who are nothing like us on the surface" (217). Writers who wish to represent the Other, she suggests, must seek for "that perfect balance of empathy and distance that is so hard to strike and so satisfying when struck" (224-225). Accordingly, the Mormon novel will likely remain little more than a "subspecies of American literature" if it long resists or overlooks seeking after these "shared kernels of humanity" and continues to think of transnational landscapes as America's foil, a place where American missionaries go to be tried and tested before they return home with honor. Mormon writers, of course, should not abandon missionary stories. However, as they create transnational Mormon worlds, they should strive for more empathy, building upon the strengths of novels like *Salvador* and *Elders*, yet also improving upon their weaknesses and rethinking their cultural presumptions. In doing so, Mormon writers may be able to avoid the pitfalls of novels like *On the Road to Heaven*, with its culturally insensitive depictions of the Other, and thus ensure that Mormon literature remains vibrant and relevant to the world-wide Church.

Furthermore, as Mormon novels strive to take a transnational leap, studies on the Mormon novel should also effect a "transnational turn," following the trend of several scholars in the fields of literary and cultural studies who have begun to use a transnational scope to make sense of the seemingly boundless movements of peoples, goods, and capital across national and political boundaries in the twenty-first century. Critics like Shelley Fisher Fishkin, for instance, writing in the context of the Bush era, have challenged American studies scholars to not echo an

reckless “pro-American nationalism” with their work, but rather to promote an “understanding [of] the multiple meaning of America and American culture in all their complexity” by “looking beyond the nation’s borders, and understanding how the nation is seen from vantage points beyond its borders” (20). Specifically, she encourages scholars to open their minds to what American studies could be “if the *transnational* rather than the national” were at the center of their work—with the expectation that such a shift in perspective would ultimately foster greater understanding in the cross-cultural border-crossings that constitute America (21, 43). Mormon scholars like Reid Neilson and Bruce W. Jorgensen have already raised awareness about the Americentric predilections of Mormon studies in their call for more attention to the global Mormon experience in order to better reflect the transnational dynamic of the Church. What if such a transnational direction were taken with even the most seemingly Utah-centric works, like Levi Petersen’s *The Backslider*, Jack Harrel’s *Vernal Promises*, or Brady Udall’s *The Lonely Polygamist*? At the center of *The Lonely Polygamist*, after all, is not only the border-crossing relationship between Golden Richards, the lonely polygamist, and Huila Leo, the Mexican wife of his employer, but also the United States’ Cold War experimentation with nuclear weapons testing in the American West, a project with global implications and devastating local consequences. What other transnational aspects remain to be uncovered and investigated in Mormon novels? Literary critics who attempt to answer this question, perhaps, may discover that the Mormon novel is deeply interested and invested in transnationality—even when it seems most indifferent.

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¹ An account of Tolstoi's interest in Mormonism as "the *American* religion" can be found in Thomas J. Yates "Count Tolstoi and the 'American Religion'" in the February 1939 issue of the *Improvement Era* (42.2). In the article, Yates recounts an evening when Dr. Andrew D. White, US Ambassador to Germany and former president of Cornell University, met with him and related an exchange he had had with Tolstoi about Mormonism in 1892. Portions of Yates' article were later included in and popularized by LeGrand Richards' *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (1950), an introductory book to Mormon belief and practice popular among missionaries and church members.

The factuality of Yates' article has, of course, been called into question. Tolstoi's words are related second-handed in the *Improvement Era* with a space of nearly forty years between the time Yates spoke with White and the time he published his account of their meeting in 1939. As historian Ethan Yorgason notes, "Tolstoy did indeed speak with White about Mormonism. Also he did modestly compliment Mormonism in an area or two. But the supremely flattering assessment of Mormonism and its fortunes is very probably a figment of LDS imaginations" (150). See also Leland A. Fetzer's "Tolstoy and Mormonism" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6.1 (1971): 13-29.

² As historian Reid L. Nielson notes, beliefs that "international Church history is too recent to chronicle;" a lack of courses in global Mormonism in universities, particularly in the Utah universities that make up the "hub of Mormon studies;" a seemingly overriding interest "in the foundational periods of Mormonism, essentially the presidential administrations of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young" (1830-1877); a lack of foreign language fluency; and the incorrect assumption that "international church history lacks the pizzazz of early American Mormonism" have contributed to an "international lacuna in [Mormonism's] documented past" (xiv-xv). Similar disinterest in the worldwide church in other fields of study have likely impeded the development of a more transnational or global perception of Mormonism as well.

³ Attendees were more likely to hear papers about the international church than papers specifically about literature in the international church, which were few. Among the papers specifically about Mormon literature in the international church presented at the 2012 Association for Mormon Letters were Tyler Chadwick's "Situating Sonosophy: Deconstructing Alex Caldiero's Poetarium," my own "Beyond Missionary Stories: Voicing the Transnational Mormon Experience," Glenn Gordon's "The Challenge of Faithful Fiction from the Mormon Diaspora," and James Goldberg's "Sylvester Lamis's *The Coconut Bond*."

⁴ In my *BYU Studies Quarterly* review of Angela Hallstrom's *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction* (2010), the most recent anthology of Mormon literary fiction, I praise its "global vision" and movement away from "stories rooted in the rural landscape of Utah and the American West," pointing specifically at Paul Rawlins' "The Garden" and Todd Robert Petersen's "Quietly" as an example of Mormon short stories that "foreshadow the possibilities of a Mormon fiction more aware of the Church's transnational experiences" (117). In something of a response to my review, however, critic James Goldberg notes that "[r]eviewers have celebrated "Quietly" for engaging with a diverse global Mormon experience, but actually we should be upset with the story for paving over a realistic Mormon experience with outdated clichés." He continues:

I do not blame readers who felt like "Quietly" was an accurate and engaging depiction of LDS life in Africa. Petersen played to many of the images of Africa that would be familiar to American readers: ethnic genocide, poverty, the ghosts of colonialism—all he's missing is a corrupt dictator and AIDS! But I do find fault with Petersen for making readers believe he's kept them in touch with the court floor of the real world when he's largely been [...] drawing at random from the map of half a continent and sometimes from a mental shelf of clichés.

⁵ This tendency is changing. *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction* (2010), the most recent anthology of literary Mormon fiction, includes stories that take place in Africa (Paul Rawlins' "The Gardern" and Todd Robert Petersen's "Quietly") and France ("Salvation"), one of which ("Quietly") is not a missionary story. Another anthology, *Monsters & Mormons*, features a non-missionary story ("Bichos") set in Brazil.

⁶ Specifically, the "global processes" Adams names are "the unprecedented integration of the world's markets, technologies, and systems of governance; surprising and innovative new forms of cultural fusion; and the mobilization of political coalitions across the lines of race, class, and other identitarian categories" (250-251). Among the "constellation of authors" whose works fit within this framework, Adams lists Jhumpa Lahiri, Sandra Cisneros, Chang Rae Lee, Junot Diaz, Ruth Ozecki, Jessica Hagerdorn, Gish Jen, Bharati Mukherjee, Susan Choi, Oscar Hijuelos, and Edwidge Danticat (251).

⁷ The relatively small number of writers producing Mormon literature seems almost enough to explain why more novels are not being written that address Mormonism from a global or transnational perspective—especially considering that most Mormon novelists who are able to find publishers for their work come from the United States and have strong ties to Utah and the Mormon Corridor. Coupled with this are market- and audience-related concerns. Of the seven major publishers currently publishing overtly Mormon fiction—Cedar Fort Books, Deseret Book, Parables Publishing, Peculiar Pages/B10 Mediaworx, Signature Books, Strange Violin Editions, and Zarahemla Books—all but three are located in Utah, and these remain in the continental United States and market their products almost exclusively to English-speaking North American Mormon audiences. Furthermore, translations of Mormon novels into languages other than English are particularly rare, with none of the current publishers offering non-English titles or translations of their English-language fiction titles.

Under such conditions, the cultivation of a Mormon literary globalism like the kind we see occurring more broadly in American fiction seems to be on no one's radar. In a sense, the borders between English- and non-English-language Mormon fiction seem at present too impenetrable. Without access to the major works in the Mormon novel tradition in their primary language, international non-English-speaking Mormon writers must learn the complexities of English in order to gain access to the existing tradition and build upon it with works informed by their own global perspectives. Furthermore, English-speaking writers similarly lack the resources (translation services, foreign-language skills) needed to benefit from the work of their international counterparts. The infrastructure of Mormon publishing is simply too weak to support such transnational movements and exchanges.

⁸ According to Sheri L. Dew, Benson's authorized biographer, Benson "viewed freedom as an essential factor in the Church's ability to take the gospel to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples [...] and if individual freedom and agency were curtailed in the United States, the spread of the gospel might be threatened." Between 1960 and 1969, fifteen of Benson's twenty sermons at the Church's annual and semiannual general conferences addressed the "defense of freedom, free enterprise, fiscal responsibility, the Constitution, [...] or his opposition to the underlying premise of socialism and communism." His sermons at the Mormon-operated Brigham Young University also treated the same themes (366-367).

⁹ American exceptionalism, of course, is hardly unique to Mormons. Since the early colonial era American Protestants have often expressed similar views in sermons. As Joseph Smith's efforts to build up and establish the City of Zion on the American continent, as well as Ezra Taft Benson's insistence that America is the "Lord's base of operations" in the latter-day, Mormons have made every effort to literalize them (Lunceford 48).

¹⁰ Benson's Americentric rhetoric softened over the years—at least in public—particularly after he became President of the Church. Today, Mormons remember Benson as much for his teachings about the Book of Mormon and the

dangers of pride as his teachings about America. However, his writings seemed to experience new life among conservative Latter-day Saints following Glenn Beck's meteoric rise to fame in the aftermath of the election of Barack Obama and the rise of Tea Party politics.

¹¹ In *The Book of Mormon* (1830), Jesus Christ visits the ancient inhabitants of America shortly after his resurrection. During his visit, he preaches the gospel to them and establishes a church. (see 3 Nephi 11-29).

¹² Even the name "Zarahemla" is misappropriated. Early in the novel Julia characterizes the Book of Mormon city as "a center of peace in our scriptures, a sort of Zion" when nothing in the Book of Mormon text indicates that it is anything of the sort (5).

¹³ Lana is compared to Jesus elsewhere in the novel. "Jesus got his joy in saving souls who were lost and forgotten," her friend Nygoya tells her. "You are much like Jesus. It is one of the reasons you wish so desperately to save Jomo" (138).

Conclusion:

The New Mormon Fiction

“Bro. Nephi Anderson spoke ~~spoke~~ of his labors in Independence Mo, as a missionary, detailing some of the labors that had been performed in building up that town. Advised the Saints to live in the present, and not to worry about the building up of Jackson County.”—Minutes, Sunday Evening Meeting, Salt Lake City 10th Ward, 16 October 1910

“I don’t think people mind looking at alternative worlds (at least I hope not!). For me, putting yourself in the position of someone whose expectations are completely blown away allows a bit of humility. And allows a kind of double reflection on our assumptions and expectations. I think it’s healthy for any faith.”—Steven L. Peck, 2014

On 16 April 2012, Steven L. Peck, an evolutionary ecologist and associate professor of biology at Brigham Young University, posted “Grace and the Literature of Gilda Trillim” on the popular Mormon culture blog *By Common Consent*. In the post, Peck writes of his research on the life and writings of Gilda Trillim, “one of Mormon literature’s most important pioneers,” whose reputation “among American literature critics” has since waned, but whose poems and novels are being eagerly received and studied by scholars in China and Ethiopia. He also provides samples of Trillim’s dense, seemingly meaningless writing, which Peck can only describe as “not easy literature”:

Chapter 21. Wherein Seekishness is Laundered.

Objects: Cloud, figurine, lighter fluid, rat, helmet, paper cup, Post Office, translator, icterids, stories, fifteenth century, flat, municipality, lecture, blouse, Anglemworm, refugee, comet, quilt, holiday, porch, finger, saw, trout, penny, haystack, guitar, loom, shadow, rain, laundry bin, caterpillar, piston, soil, hen, nematode, steeple, mountain pass, Nancy, muskrat, ankle, Romanian, perfume, vessel, avenue, moat, pedestrian, brandy, suggestion, fairies, swamp, flax, soup, pocket watch, yam, baby powder, lentil, music box, plus sign, braid, wishing well, door knocker, toy soldier, dirt clod.

Action: flee, escape, canter, coalesce, inform, delete, bicker, saunter, deliberate, slouch, press, prostrate, hurdle, wander, peddle, fixate, blast, stare, destroy, argue, bless, forsake, delineate, hope, sit, flip, seek, slip, orchestrate, belittle, bounce, stomp, flicker.

Attribute: green, bright, overt, spritely, comely, glowing, dark, heavy, sanguine, overt, lazy, grey, gifted, mysterious, great, eager, obedient, quaint, clumsy, melodic, panicky, steep, obnoxious, high, witty, hollow, victorious, glamorous, purple.

In the manner of: swift, careful, vigorous, doubt, loud, eager, calm, glee, fond, just, acid, quirk, playful, shrill, late.

Over the course of this and eight subsequent posts, Peck continues the narrative of his research, delineating what he has learned about Trillim's esoteric writings and globe-trotting life, including her time as a badminton player in England, a cloistered painter in a Russia convent, a snooping house-sitter in Norway, a melancholic passenger on an Atlantic cruise from Boston to Rome, and a prisoner in Southeast Asia. The posts are generally long, often comprised of

Trillim's writings—in the form of meandering letters to her friend Babs Lake, poetry, or novel excerpts—and Peck's brief commentary. In the final post, a journal excerpt that describes Trillim's effort to make Emily Dickinson's black cake, Peck characterizes her work as an exploration of "the connections between things: People, ecologies, and objects of all types large and small" ("Trillim Cooks"). Unfortunately, Peck reports, this work has gone unnoticed or unapologetically dismissed by Mormon literary critics, whom Trillim believed did not "want to remember [her] as Mormon or claim [her] as one of [their] own." His hope, which he expresses at the end of the first Trillim post to appear on *By Common Consent*, is that the Association for Mormon Letters, currently the only professional organization devoted exclusively to the study of Mormon literature, "will revive this grand Lady of Mormon Letters whose name deserves to come out of obscurity" ("Grace").

Closely associated with *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, *By Common Consent* is a forum for non-fictional social, cultural, and doctrinal commentary, and for this reason, readers of Peck's Trillim posts—particularly the first two—were unsure of what to make of them. Some readers, perhaps those familiar with Peck's recent novel *The Scholar of Moab* (2011) and novella *A Short Stay in Hell* (2012), immediately recognized the posts as fiction—excerpts, possibly, from a novel in the works. Others, however, were clearly fooled by the narratives, mistaking Peck's accounts of his Trillim "research" for actual events. (One reader, for example, noted earnestly that her father would have attended the same high school with Trilliam at around the same time.) The posts, to be sure, leave clues to their fictional and metafictional quality, hyperlinking references to academic conferences, scholarly books, and pictures of Trillim to a page that reports: "Quantum chronology asynchrony error: The site you are trying to access is not a part of your timeline please recalibrate and try again..." ("Grace"). Yet, even this

error message confused some readers, though, possibly because of the ubiquity of error messages in cyberspace. Consequently, in discussions about Trillim, where she was either the topic of debate or circumstantially alluded to, it was not uncommon for those who had missed the fictional and metafictional quality of Peck's posts to express confusion or embarrassment when it had to be pointed out to them. For these readers, the playful blurring of fiction and non-fiction, story and history, was unexpected and therefore missed. For these readers, Mormon fiction had always either taken the form of Jack Weyland's or Blaine and Brent Yorgason's faith-promoting fiction—usually something to be decried on sites like *By Common Consent*—or squarely relegated to Mormon literary blogs like *A Motley Vision*, *Dawning of a Brighter Day*, or *Segullah*. In sneaking his Trillim posts onto *By Common Consent*, however, Peck proposed a kind of shift not only in how Mormons write fiction, but also in how they share it. The anxieties nineteenth-century Mormons felt for fiction's *fictional*, “dishonest” quality could now be flouted among their twenty-first century descendants, and boundaries of genre and venue, once mediators of these anxieties, could now be breeched and played with without notice. Indeed, like Peck's other fiction, the Trillim posts sought aggressively to push contemporary Mormon fiction away from existing paradigms and guide it into realms hitherto unexplored.

As a reader and scholar of Mormon fiction, I have taken to calling recent works that push against established directions in Mormon fiction the “New Mormon Fiction,” a classifier I filched from Eugene England,¹ who used the term to describe late developments in Faithful Realism that, in my opinion, only extended the project of Faithful Realism generally beyond the concerns of Intermountain West Mormonism (see “Mormon Literature” and “The New Mormon Fiction”). This new New Mormon Fiction, however, of which the Trillim posts are part, is responding to a far different cultural context than its literary predecessors, particularly in respect

to how Mormon writers currently view their relationship to the Church as an institution. In the days of Nephi Anderson, after all, Mormon novels often had a propagandistic quality to them that worked hand-in-hand with the Church's efforts to promote itself as a monogamous mainstream Christian denomination with a phenomenal health code. Later in the century, however, Mormon writers reconfigured this propagandistic mode to new ends, employing the novel as a vehicle for internal critique, especially as a predominately leftist forum for responding to and stemming the influence of late-century retrenchment efforts. We see this particularly in the works of Faithful Realist writers who gave us characters whose marginal place within Mormon worlds challenged the way the Church and its dominant culture maintained its internal and external borders—frequently to show how this border maintenance failed to live up to the Restoration's vision of Zion, the ideal society. While we still see both of these trends in Mormon novels today, we are beginning to see the rise of a new Mormon fiction that is more interested in viewing Mormonism as an arena of endlessly multiple and co-existent utopian possibilities than as a reformer's tool or statement of belief or dissent. If anything, the New Mormon Fiction is defined by its acceptance of ambiguity and essential indifference to bearing witness to the "Truth" (or "un-Truth") of Mormonism. While it continues to betray the accent of post-utopian Mormonism's layered voice, it seems to be responding to the challenge of assimilation in new ways.

My belief is that this shift is partly due to Mormonism's increased visibility and self-awareness since the turn of the new millennium. Throughout the twentieth-century, cultural tensions ran high—as much between Mormons and non-Mormon as Mormons and themselves—with very few outlets for expressing and exploring these tensions openly and honestly without serious repercussions in the sphere of public opinion or in Church disciplinary courts. Since the

rise of the internet and the Mormon “Bloggernacle”—that vast and expanding network of Mormon-themed and –authored blogs—these tensions have abated somewhat as new media forums—including social media forums like Facebook and Twitter—have mediated these tensions and made them, on the one hand, essentially too big (and too public) to police, and, on the other, rather commonplace and pedestrian. Twenty years ago, amid the culture wars that climaxed with the excommunication of six intellectuals in 1992, many Mormons would have been scandalized by the kind of rhetoric now typical of blogs like *Feminist Mormon Housewives*, *By Common Consent*, and *Times and Seasons*, and ecclesiastical leaders would have had their hands full trying to put out heretical fires; thanks to the ubiquity of social media and other forms of information sharing, however, Mormons have become more aware of and used to alternative voices within their community—and about their community. Indeed, utopian expression—in the form of propaganda, critique, and/or doctrinal speculation and communal dreaming—has become the normal mode of operation in the online Mormon community and almost anyone with internet access can participate in it (openly or anonymously) without getting called into a Bishop’s or Stake President’s office for censure. Furthermore, when mainstream media outlets get Mormonism “wrong,” Mormons don’t have to stew about it until someone publishes a response in *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, or the *Church News* several weeks or months later. They can respond instantaneously *en masse*—often with the effect of correcting public misconceptions—and then move on. While certain controversies within and about Mormonism remain rather constant—especially over matters of history and gender roles in the Church—most others tend to have short shelf-lives.

Scholars are beginning to comment on this shift. Armand Mauss, the sociologist whose studies on Mormon assimilation and retrenchment in *The Angel and the Beehive* (1994) have

informed much of this dissertation, recently revisited his claims and conclusions in light of these new developments. As I note at the end of Chapter Three, the LDS Church presidencies of Howard W. Hunter (1994-1995) and Gordon B. Hinckley (1995-2008) enacted, for Mauss, a number of “changes in Church policy” that “had the cumulative effect of pulling the pendulum of ecclesiastical culture back somewhat from the retrenchment mode,” giving “the Church a different ‘feel’” in the first decade of the twenty-first century than it had had under retrenchment (4). Among the policy changes Mauss notes have been a “recent official tendency to soft-pedal” some of Mormonism’s “most distinctive teachings” (heavenly parents, eternal progression, human potential to be like God) in order to “enhance its image as a mainstream Christian denomination, rather than a weird ‘cult;” a more nuanced approach to matters of gender roles and family; an increased participation of women in church meetings and leadership; a softening stance on same-sex desire and the status of homosexual members; and a new openness (and even warm support) of Mormon academics and “unsponsored” scholarship, including the granting of greater access to the once tightly-guarded church archives (6, 8, 11, 13, 15). At the same time, Mauss notes that retrenchment notions remain strong “at the grass-roots level,” especially since correlation remains “alive and well” and still enormously influential in shaping church culture in conservative directions (20). Furthermore, “[u]nwelcome national attention” has also plagued Mormonism recently in the form of “schismatic” polygamist groups (both real and fictional), “[h]ostility and ridicule from gay rights advocates and their allies” in response to the Church’s aggressive role in campaigns against same-sex marriage in California and elsewhere, and ongoing stereotypes of Mormons as “weird” propagated through works like *Angel in America* and *The Book of Mormon* musical, all of which have generated a certain anxiety within the Mormon community about “losing control over its own public image” (22). For Mauss, this

climate has created a certain degree of uncertainty about the future of the Mormon community. As he states at the end of his reassessment, “One wonders what additional course corrections are around the corner as the Church approaches its bicentennial, and what implications these might have for LDS members in other parts of the world” (28).

In respect to the Mormon novel, perhaps the most notable effect of these course corrections and the new intellectual climate has been the diminishing relevance of Faithful Realism, which has, along with its counterparts in Mormon history and sociology, carried the banner of alternative Mormonism for the last forty years. Some novels, like *The Backslider* and Douglas Thayer’s excellent coming-of-age novels, are still powerful and relevant—often because their utopian impulse was either muted or rather broadly directed. Others novels, like Linda Sillitoe’s *Sideways to the Sun* or John Bennion’s *Falling Toward Heaven*, however, remain readable, but seem increasingly less relevant to a present when online communities of, say, Mormon feminists are more visible and effective in their activism. This, of course, is a good sign because it suggests that Mormon literature, like Mormon culture itself, is evolving in new directions rather than stagnating. At the same time, it makes some traditionalists worried about what the future holds for Mormon letters. For instance, on *Dawning of a Brighter Day*, the blog of the Association for Mormon Letters, Peck’s *The Scholar of Moab* was the subject of two frustrated reviews, both of which, while admiring its artistry, found its approach to Mormonism rather soulless and inconclusive. One reviewer, complained that the narrator of *The Scholar of Moab*, a mysterious man who goes by “the Redactor,” “just presents [a collection of texts] and says they represent something strange but wonderful, with no significant interpretive commentary” (Parkin). The other reviewer took issue with the novel’s representation of Mormons themselves as “naive and gullible and narrow-minded,” leading her to wonder if

“faithful, sacrificing, praying, learning, and repenting Mormons [are] just not worthy of the kind of wonderful writing produced by authors like Steven L. Peck and Brady Udall” (Dalton-Woodbury). In both cases, the reviewers express evident dissatisfaction with the New Mormon Fiction’s resistance to anchoring itself to a single stance or identifiable point-of-view on Mormonism.

The issues these reviewers raise are important ones, to be sure, but, at the same time, they may be issues that are outside the immediate concerns of writers of the New Mormon Fiction, who seem to have other ideas about what the future of Mormonism holds. And what does its future hold? I think the present landscape of Mormonism gives us some clues. The internet is changing Mormon culture in a variety of ways, and one of the main catalysts of this change is the seemingly unlimited and unrestricted access to information about Mormonism via blogs, podcasts, databases, and other information/research resources. Mormons (along with those interested in Mormonism) are now exposed to facts, opinions, and ideas about their religion in an almost unparalleled way. Some Mormons, as I note in Chapter Four, are finding this access to be a very harrowing and faith-destroying development. Others revel in the intellectual freedom it allows and use it to amass and dump information for the hungry minds of cultural, historical, and theological analysts. Surprising developments in this area include the emergence of the Joseph Smith Papers project, published and partially funded by the historical department of the LDS Church; the ubiquity of Mormon podcasts on intellectual subjects; and the emergence of “Gospel Topics” articles on lds.org, the official website of the LDS Church, on topics such as “Race and the Priesthood,” “Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah,” “Accounts of the First Vision,” “DNA and the Book of Mormon,” “Book of Mormon Translation,” and “Becoming Like God” written with the aid of scholars. Furthermore, the Church Educational System (CES), the

education wing of the LDS Church, has now included lessons on the multiple (and at times conflicting) accounts of Joseph Smith's first vision, nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre in its Seminary curriculum for Latter-day Saint high schoolers, thus ensuring that younger generations will become aware of controversial aspects of the Mormon past earlier and perhaps avoid the epidemic of faith crises plaguing their parents' and grandparents' generations. At the same time, this information dump is raising a host of concerns from some Mormons who struggle to reconcile the Church's new openness with their hitherto long-standing silence on these matters. Indeed, the LDS Church's retreat from aspects of its master narrative, as well as its openness about the fallibility of its top leadership, have left many feeling unsure of what or whom to trust. If anything, these developments suggest that the immediate future of Mormonism will be rocky and uncertain—at least until these course corrections become more institutionalized and Mormons achieve a kind of equilibrium.

Significantly, though, the New Mormon Fiction to emerge from this context seems to draw upon both the euphoria and anxiety of this transitional period, creating narratives that suggest, if nothing else, Mormonism's capacity to renew and reinvent itself. Examples of these texts include Alex Rex Mitchell's *Angel of the Danube* (2000), Arianne Cope's *The Coming of Elijah* (2006), D. Michael Martindale's *Brother Brigham* (2007), Todd Robert Petersen's *Family History* (2007), Coke Newell's *On the Road to Heaven* (2007), Angela Hallstrom's *Bound on Earth* (2008), Jack Harrell's *A Sense of Order and Other Stories* (2010), Brady Udall's *The Lonely Polygamist* (2010), David Clark's *The Death of a Disco Dancer* (2011), Moriah Jovan's *Magdalene* (2011), Wm Morris and Theric Jepson's anthology *Monsters and Mormons* (2011), Steven L. Peck's *The Scholar of Moab* (2011) and *A Short Stay in Hell* (2012), Sarah Dunster's *Lightning Tree* (2012), James Goldberg's *The Five Books of Jesus* (2012), Theric Jepson's *Byuck*

(2013), and D. J. Butler's *City of the Saints* (2013).² (Also, recent works of Mormon flash fiction and Twitter microfiction also contribute in conjunction with these works.) While hardly uniform, these works have followed several trends that, combined, suggest a different set of interests and focus than one finds in earlier Mormon novels. For instance, some works of the New Mormon Fiction are absurdist and darkly comical, not unlike mainstream postmodern works since the 1960s, which contrasts greatly with the intense self-importance evident in both Home Literature and Faithful Realism novels. Others are comprised of fictional documents, document fragments, and interviews that call into question what we know about history and the act of constructing narratives and metanarratives. Still others foreground conflicts between individuals and information, rather than individuals and the Church, its members, or the dominant culture. Some works, moreover, are intertextual and/or transgress the boundaries of genre and form. Several of these works also show an indifference to historical fact or employ suspect narration, misdirecting readers with unreliable narrators and red herrings. The New Mormon fiction is also interested in vignettes or fragment views of Mormon life, future Mormonisms and dystopias, and bizarre (often pop-culture-infused) encounters with the divine. Stylistically, they can be minimalist and maximalist, realistic and magically realistic. Collectively, these works comprise a Mormon fiction that emphasizes acts of discovery and recovery, creative production, and paradigm subversions—often to create disorientation that undermines assumptions about truth and faith in the historical record and folk doctrine; foregrounds the fleeting, ephemeral quality of Mormon cultural life; recreates the often exhausting challenge of coming to terms with too much information; and forces readers to configure new “Mormon” realities.

Perhaps the most interesting and characteristic aspect of these works, however, is the ambiguous stance many of them take towards institutional Mormonism. Indeed, unlike novels by

Home Literature, Lost Generation, and Faithful Realist writers, New Mormon Fiction writers seem to lack an apparent interest in rendering propaganda for or critiques of the institutional church, thus fulfilling, in a way, Eugene England's 1999 call for a literature of the "radical middle" that has "no simplistic pro-Mormon or anti-Mormon agenda," but rather strives for "careful esthetic skill and ethical insight" (30). Indeed, in these novels, the Church largely functions as incidental part of a broader Mormon landscape. Of more concern, rather, are the myriad ways Mormon culture, history, and theology intersect with broader culture to create hybrid, post-utopian landscapes, as when the Holy Ghost manifests itself in Billy Joel lyrics in Theric Jepson's *Byuck*, or become enlisted in playful (though often deeply serious) games of speculation, as we see in Jack Harrell's *A Sense of Order and Other Stories* or Steven L. Peck's *A Short Stay in Hell*. Indeed, in Peck's novella, a deliberate homage to Borges (with a bit of Kafka and Book of Mormon thrown in), Soren Johansson, a faithful Mormon geologist, dies from cancer and ends up not in the spirit paradise described in Mormon scripture, but in a Zoroasterian hell. For Johansson, the realization that the afterlife is not what he had always imagined throws him into an existential crisis that is only exacerbated by the nature of the hell he finds himself in: a seemingly endless library—inspired by the library in Borges' "The Library of Babel" (1941)—wherein every book that has ever been written or could have been written can be found. Johansson's task is to find the one book that describes his "earthly life story (without errors, e.g., in spelling, grammar, etc.)" and feed it through a designated slot so that he can gain entrance into heaven, which is lorded over by the Zoroasterian god Ahura Mazda. The task seems simple enough, but the simplicity of this hell is deceiving. *A Short Stay in Hell* is only 108 pages, but it covers billions of years. Johansson's search takes a long, long time.

The book, however, is not about Johansson's search—not entirely. Upon arriving in hell, he is informed that he is there “to learn something,” but warned that he shouldn't “try to figure out what it is” because doing so would only be “frustrating and unproductive” (19). *A Short Stay in Hell*, therefore, foregrounds the struggle to find meaning after every traditional framework and paradigm for meaning has been exploded. Johansson and his fellow hellmates—all of whom are white Americans from the post-war era—grasp for meaning at every opportunity, after all, wresting the least bit of sense from the absurd gibberish contained in most of the books in the library. To a certain extent, they bring some meaning to their lives by organizing exploratory expeditions, holding award ceremonies, creating makeshift Zoroasterian religions, and founding a university. For the most part, though, these efforts are futile and hollow. As one character notes:

The absurdity of it has never left me. We can't care about anything here. We can't make a difference—all meaning has been subtracted, we don't know where anything comes from or where it goes. There's no context in our lives. We're all white, equal ciphers, instances of the same absurdity repeated over and over. We try to scratch some hope or meaning out of it with our university, but ultimately there is nothing to attach meaning to. We're damned. (65)

But the lives of those in *A Short Stay in Hell* are not always as bleak as this character makes them sound. True, much of what Johansson experiences in hell lives up to its name. (While there is no fire and brimstone—no *real* fire and brimstone, that is—there are plenty of bad people in hell, including a demagogue named Dire Dan, who terrorizes its inhabitants with a sadistically corrupt religion.) Even so, Johansson still finds friendship, love, and hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. In the end, these glimmers of light do not add up to much against the

absurdity of hell and the despair it cultivates, but the novella seems to suggest that these good things matter, regardless of how small or weak they may be.

A Short Stay in Hell, therefore, takes into account the absurdity and cruelty of existence, yet it also asks readers to consider how they make meaning out of the chaos God gives them—or how they make God (or variations of God) out of the chaos. This, I think, is where *A Short Stay in Hell* departs from the realm of Faithful Realism. It is not the novella's fantastic setting or implausible premise that separates it from so much of literary Mormon fiction, but the ambiguous stance it takes to faith, belief, and other such things Mormon fiction has long held dear and central to its cultural work. Peck's novella is heretical, in a sense, but in the same way early Mormonism's utopian goals and professed break with Protestant Christianity were heretical in the nineteenth century. It is fiction that seeks to break firmly away from anchored models and formulas in order to clear the way for something new to emerge and coexist. It challenges readers, that is, to think about what they can do to make new—even better—meaning from the meaning they already have—or have already lost.

What I've just described, of course, could simply be evidence that the Mormon novel has finally caught up with the aesthetics of literary postmodernism—providing further evidence that Mormon culture tends to lag thirty years behind the mainstream. At the same time, however, I think we do a disservice to these novels if we present them simply as Mormon counterparts to (or imitations of) mainstream postmodernism. As evidenced in works like *A Short Stay in Hell*, this new Mormon fiction undoubtedly borrows from literary postmodernism; yet, it also responds directly to the precarious place Mormonism finds itself at the dawn of the new millennium. Aware of the challenge to embrace the frenzied openness and information-rich climate of internet culture while maintaining identifiable Mormon borders, it invites readers to revel in and

explore the cultural upheaval that surrounds them. It reminds readers that the past is an enigmatic archive, the present an icy hill, the future something between a dream and a nightmare. It is exciting fiction that is itself a utopia: a bishop's storehouse-turned-funhouse where one's anxieties about the present and future of Mormonism can find relief and transform, if one lets them, into what the Book of Mormon calls "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20).

As I argue throughout this dissertation, the Mormon novel is a deliberately hybrid text, the offspring of the great and hitherto enduring compromise between Zion and Babylon. The New Mormon Fiction, perhaps, is also fiction that simply recognizes that Babylon has always been a part of Zion. Indeed, as some have called Joseph Smith a "cultural sponge" for the way the Prophet absorbed his nineteenth-century world to give shape to the cosmology swirling through his head, and the same may be said of Zion (see Barlow xxxi-xxxii). Smith's Plat for the City of Zion—the foursquare, gridiron plan he drew up to bring order to his Missouri colony—was nothing Jacksonian America had not seen before, after all, nor were his plans for wealth redistribution or cooperative living. Even polygamy, which defined the nineteenth-century Zion against Babylon, was not so radical in the context of other contemporary experiments in human sexuality and marriage, such as the Oneida community's "complex marriage" system or the Shaker's celibacy. Smith, no doubt, saw himself and his Zion as radical breaks from tradition, as did his followers; yet, more often than not, their radicalness was highly derivative and largely rhetorical. The world, in a sense, has always been a part of Mormonism because Mormonism—unlike Enoch's City of Zion in Smith's inspired "translation" of Genesis—has always had its roots in the soil of this world. (Indeed, the Book of Mormon emerged "from the dust"!) Zion and Babylon are intertwined in Mormonism, and the post-utopian condition is, in many ways, a kind of acquiescence to the realities of this lineage. Zion is a hodgepodge of Babylon's best efforts to

be pure in heart. Or, to draw once more from Jameson, Zion is a “garage space” of utopian possibility—a place where Babylon’s discarded culture is replanned, retooled, and reorganized into something better (see 14).

This metaphor, to be sure, is consistent with how Mormons see all creation. Joseph Smith, in the last decade of his life, came to understand creation not as something *ex nihilo*, but as the organization of existing materials and set in motion through obedience to eternal laws that pre-existed even God. Like his God, Joseph Smith was a great organizer, collecting shards of existing culture to give form to his religious world and kingdom. For Mormon novelist Jack Harrell, this is the paradigm of the Mormon writer as well:

In the Mormon universe, failure, success, risk, fortune, uncertainty, freedom, and epiphany all play useful and Godly roles. The making of meaning through science, art, and literature aligns ideally with Mormon theology. Our desire to make meaning results from seeing the universe as God does. He looks at unorganized matter and envisions order. Then he brings it about. That characteristic defines him, and it should define us. When we make order in our creative endeavors, we live out ‘the common Mormon idea that man participates with God in an endless and progressive creative process.’ (8)

In Peck’s overt borrowing from Borges, Theric Jepson’s substitution of Billy Joel for the voice of God, and even Moriah Jovan’s unorthodox mixing of Mormonism and Harlequin erotica, Mormon novelists are overtly embracing their roles as organizers of unorganized cultural matter. In accord with the merging of the sacred and profane in Frank Windham’s vision of the Cowboy Jesus in *The Backslider*, these novelists are aware and accepting of the equality of cultural influences that feed Zion and its establishment. In a sense, they follow the advice of Nephi

Anderson, who, having served as a missionary in Independence, Missouri, returned to tell the Mormon people to “live in the present, and not to worry about the building up of Jackson County” (“Sunday Evening”). Despite the concreteness of his portrait of Zion in *Added Upon*, Anderson seems to have come to understand that the future of the Mormon Zion was in the abstract. The building blocks of Zion, the material for the ever-shifting walls of post-utopian Mormonism, were not to be hewn and layered, stone by stone, from a centralized quarry in western Missouri. Rather, they were to come from the cultural bedrock of the world around the Mormon people. It is from this understanding of the layered constitution of Mormonism that the layered voice of the New Mormon Fiction springs. It embraces each layer and revels in the ways each show how Zion, for better or worse, is the sum of its many hearts and many minds.

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¹ Not unlike how England filched "Faithful Realism" from Cracroft, perhaps.

² Some notable precursors to the New Mormon Fiction include Orson Scott Card's *Saints* (1983) and *Folk of the Fringe* (1989), Levi S. Peterson's *The Backslider* (1986), and Linda Sillitoe's *Secrets Keep* (1995), and Judith Freeman's *Red Water* (2002).