

William Morris, 2000

Slowly flowering:

Mormon Literary Criticism on Mormon Literary History and Future

Restoration is a crucial concept for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the LDS<sup>1</sup> worldview, history is a series of restorations of God's gospel and covenant followed by periods of apostasy. Members of the LDS Church are the true inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant, the holders of the complete gospel of Christ and the authority of Christ's apostles (which was lost in the early days of the Christian church after the apostles died out). As a result of this worldview, Latter-day Saints see themselves as a chosen people and thus as an ethnic community fit more closely with the "ideological" stream of ethnic myth outlined by Anthony Smith, than with the genealogical one (70-71). Smith writes that ethnic myths that have an ideological basis "trace descent through cultural and ideological affinity with presumed ancestors and epochs" (71). The restoration effectuated by LDS Church prophet and founder Joseph Smith, a restoration based on the discovery of lost scripture along with direct revelation from God, reconnected humanity with the God of Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Peter, James, and John and more. The Latter-day Saints, then, have an affinity with any (Judeo-Christian) ancestor in

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see endnote A for a glossary of the terms used in this paper.

any epoch who, in their view, held the proper authority and the revealed truth of God.

But while many of those ancestors limited their religious-ethnic community to familial (tribal) levels (e.g. par excellence: Israel), the LDS Church, like the early Christians, actively proselytes to all nations that allow its missionaries and congregations within its borders. This means that the body of the chosen people is always open, expanding and continuously being infused with new adherents, new blood, while some members who have a genealogical connection to the Church lapse into inactivity.

This process of infusion and inactivity leads to important implications for Mormon culture, a culture rooted in the descendants of the original Mormon pioneers who settled primarily in Utah, Idaho, and Arizona. Mormon culture is based on LDS theology, membership, and history, but encompasses a broader range of attitudes and practices that can be engaged in no matter what one's actual standing in relation to the Church is. For example, it involves habits of everyday life (food and clothes), political beliefs, and more importantly for this work, artistic production, especially music and books. While music might be the most consumed Mormon product, it is in the field of literary culture that most of the debates and theorizing about Mormon culture has taken place.

That said, it is true that Mormon literary theory is a relatively

new field of study. While literary production and criticism has been an important component of Mormon culture since its inception in the 1830s, it wasn't until the 1960s that journals appeared that provided a regular forum for Mormon literary criticism. The first anthology of Mormon literature (and with it the first university course on the subject) was published in 1974.

Richard Terdiman argues, "theories organize what we notice, and thereby what we recall. They model representation and determine its field of referentiality--the organization a theory thus prescribes is never innocent" (13). As Mormon literary theory and history has progressed, it has organized the field by borrowing and integrating from the general field of literary criticism, but in doing so, it struggles to identify a central core, or a unique valence to Mormon literature and criticism. While some critics argue against the attempt to essentialize Mormon literature, even they must contend at some level with the 'Mormon-ness' of their work.

But more fundamentally, through its recovering and criticism of Mormon literary history, Mormon literary theory invokes a set of texts and way of viewing them that helps preserve a Mormon ethnies<sup>2</sup>, an ethnies which includes individuals beyond active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And more importantly, by

---

<sup>2</sup> I'm using this term much like Anthony Smith uses it, that is as "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among the Élites" (13).

exposing the deficiencies of the current Mormon literary canon, Mormon literary theory sustains the dream of a great literature produced by a chosen people, a dream that combines memory and desire, a prophecy that drives the very literary production that ensures the survival of the ethnies.

The nexus of this desire is a statement made by one of the earliest writers of Mormon fiction, Orson F. Whitney. In his 1988 essay, "Home Literature," Whitney explains the value of literary fiction, outlines parameters for an LDS literature, and then makes this prophecy<sup>3</sup>: "We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own. God's ammunition is not exhausted. His brightest spirits<sup>4</sup> are held in reserve for the latter times. In God's name and by his help we will build up a literature whose top shall touch heaven, though its foundations may now be low in the earth" (Whitney, 206).

It is this dream, that of a great literature, that colors most Mormon literary criticism. Mormon literary history becomes a story of failure combined with promise for the future. Crucial to this history is the breaking of the history in to four distinct literary periods by Eugene England, something he first did in a 1982 essay for *BYU Studies*. It has

---

<sup>3</sup> Prophecy is a tricky thing in LDS theology. I think the best way to explain it is to say that sometimes inspired women and men can make educated guesses about the future, but only the prophet (and president of the Church) makes prophecies that are binding, and then only when he makes an official declaration by the authority of his position. This statement, then, by Whitney is an expression of potential not a literal truism.

<sup>4</sup> In LDS theology, spirits are what other Christians might call souls---eternal beings of intelligence that exist in the presence of God, who take on a mortal shell (the body) and enter a temporal existence.

since been reprinted and revised in several venues, including the only anthology of Mormon literary criticism, the 1996 volume *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature*<sup>5</sup>.

The four periods England delineates are: Foundations, 1830-80; Home Literature, 1880-1930; The Lost Generation, 1930-70; and Faithful Realism, 1960-Present (~22). These did not necessarily spring immaculately from England's mind, but have been hinted at or even named by earlier critics; England, however, was the first to put it all together. Discussing each period, in light of its predecessors will show why the story is one of failure and the ideological implications that conclusion entails.

### **Foundations, 1830-80:**

This literary period, which runs concurrent with the beginnings of the LDS Church, is characterized by England as "an initial outpouring of largely unsophisticated writing, expressive of the new converts' dramatic symbolic as well as literal journeys to Zion<sup>6</sup> and their fierce rejection of Babylon, and often intended to meet the immediate and practical needs of the church for hymns, sermons, and tracts" (22). But despite the unsophistication of the writing, this period and these

---

<sup>5</sup> For this work, I'm using the expanded, updated version found on the "Mormon Literature Website." See Works Cited list. Please note that where available, I give paragraph numbers for works published online.

<sup>6</sup> Zion is both a literal gathering place (i.e. Utah), or a future Utopian society (where the pure in heart dwell), or simply wherever Latter-day Saints dwell. This use refers to the first instance.

(un-literary, or at least classically so) forms literally form a foundation upon which to build a more polished, creative literature. William Mulder calls the letters, diaries, oral traditions a "subliterature" that "come closer to exhibiting the genius of Mormonism as a force and movement than the more formal literary types thrice removed from their original inspiration" (*Mormonism* 209). What's more, he claims, in one of the earliest journal articles on Mormon literature (1955), that "it is in these themes and modes, these beginning of literature, we should attempt to find what is, or has been, characteristic of Mormon literature and what may hold promise for the future" (*Mormonism* 209). In a newer article (1995), he explains further:

I have dwelt on these familiar beginnings, at once so exotic and native to the American grain, to emphasize their relevance to our contemporary storytelling. The Mormon past as a continuing presence begs for imaginative treatment, particularly when the impact of the past on our present creates a conflict of cultures or a crisis of belief. (*Essential* n. pag.)

In some ways, then this period of Mormon history and letters constitutes a glorious past. The pioneers of the LDS Church, those that suffered persecutions in Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri, those that trekked across the plains and worked to build a civilization of their own in the West, are viewed as the giants of the past. They are the founders who endured great sacrifice and, while not necessarily part of a 'golden age' are, to quote Anthony Smith, "a touchstone of virtue and heroism" (65). If they did not produce a great literature, it was because they were struggling merely to survive, and their zeal and fortitude and

heartache, expressed in letters and journals, hymns and sermons, breathes with energy and authenticity.

The failure of Mormon literature is not that this generation did not produce it, but that this period hasn't been adequately represented, remolded into higher form by subsequent generations. This sentiment finds its most trenchant expression in a 1977 article in the *Ensign*, an official LDS magazine, by then President of the LDS Church Spencer W. Kimball<sup>7</sup>. Adapted from a speech he gave to faculty at Brigham Young University in the mid-60's, the article appeared in a special issue on the arts. Kimball writes:

For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the Restoration, the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter-reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith, of whom we sing 'Oh, what rapture filled his bosom, For he saw the living God' (*Hymns*, no. 136); and of the giant colonizer and builder, Brigham Young.

We are proud of the artistic heritage that the Church has brought to us from its earliest beginnings, but the full story of Mormonism has never yet been written nor painted nor sculpted nor spoken. It remains for inspired hearts and talented fingers yet to reveal themselves. They must be faithful, inspired, active Church members to give life and feeling and true perspective to a subject so worthy. Such masterpieces should run for months in every movie center, cover every part of the globe in the tongues of the people, written by great artists, purified by the best critics. (Kimball n. pag.)

Of course, the failure Kimball describes is not the same one that

---

<sup>7</sup> The President of the LDS Church is also considered a prophet and the heir, in authority and revelation, to Joseph Smith.

Mulder sees. While both find those early days to be a rich, unexploited soil of inspiration, Kimball, the official producer of LDS ideology, stresses that that heritage must be expressed by orthodox, inspired Church members; whereas Mulder, the academic, wants Mormon artists to confront how that past informs the present, creating a "conflict of cultures or a crisis of belief." But for both, the memory of that foundational period carries with it, if not a failure to appropriately memorialize, at least a failure of adequate representation.

### **Home Literature, 1880-1930:**

On the surface, the failure of the second period of Mormon literary history appear very simple. To return to England's summary: this period saw "the creation, in the next fifty years, of a 'home literature' in Utah, highly didactic fiction and poetry designed to defend and improve the Saints but of little lasting worth--and also the refining of Mormon theological and historical writing--into excellent and lasting forms" (~22). It was during this time that the Latter-day Saints began to feel the pressure of secularization as 'gentiles' began to move into their communities, as Utah became part of the United States (which led to the official renunciation of polygamy and thus an end to persecution from the government), as modernization began to take place in the West, and higher education became more available, the institutions and culture of the Mormons began to stabilize and there

finally arose a class, a second generation of intellectuals who could aid in building the kingdom because they didn't have to scratch a living from the land.

The foremost figure of this time is Orson F. Whitney, he of the Miltons and Shakespeares. Anthony Smith points out that the threat of secularization often is a catalyst for an outpouring of ethnic myth (84). Whitney's essay on 'home literature' is the key document that shows how the LDS intelligentsia (who at this point were also the political and religious leaders of the community) responded to secularism. In the essay, Whitney invokes the memory of the early pioneers who created the foundations, tries to awaken the young Saints to their duty to build the "superstructure" and not "bow down to mammon" or "waste time in folly and dissipation" (204). And how will this superstructure be built?:

"It is by means of literature that much of this great work will have to be accomplished; a literature of power and purity, worthy of such a work. And a pure and powerful literature can only proceed from a pure and powerful people. Grape are not gathered of thorns, nor figs of thistles." (204)

The literature then is to be a reflection of the worthiness of the Mormons themselves. What's more it must be "original," must be "diverse from all others," must "live and breathe for itself" (206). These are the words that inspire and haunt the later generation, but the 'home literature' movement itself, with its many poems and stories, and several novels, failed to live up to the promise of a

Mormon literature. England speaks of didacticism, here's why: "Our literature will help to take it there [to the educated gentiles]; for this, like all else which we have to do, must be made subservient to the building up of Zion" (205). Literature pressed into the service of a message, the oil of experience, that tumult, expressed, leaving the messy pulp and the crushed bits of the stone.

Others, including myself, are not so quick to dismiss the attempts of the home literature movement as simply reeking of didacticism. Richard Cracroft, for example, writes, in an essay that he calls a "long footnote" evaluating the fiction of B.H. Roberts, who was mainly a writer of theology but also a co-conspirator in the movement with Whitney and Susa Young Gates:

Such a footnote about Roberts is not only instructive because of the additional light it sheds on the home literature movement and the Mormon penchant for the didactic, but also because it may suggest how a mind such as Robert's engages Mormon subjects with intentions which, while originally didactic, become increasingly artistic. Indeed, the LDS desire to fuse the didactic and the artistic have been at once the grand ideal and the grand failure of Mormon letters. Robert's gropings to achieve such a fusion may help modern Mormons clarify their own literary dilemmas. (117-188)

But whether or not later Mormon authors seek to achieve this fusion, what is clear is that this literary movement created a grand vision of what Mormon literature could become by claiming that the unique history and worldview of the LDS people could lead to a unique literature. What's more (and what's perplexing for most authors and critics), the home literature movement trained a Mormon audience to

read, enjoy, and privilege didactic works. As Eugene England points out:

The forms and formulas of home literature that were developed in this second period continue into the present as the kind published and encouraged by official Mormon [e.g. LDS] outlets (the *Friend*, *New Era*, and *Ensign*, and Deseret Book) and also those, like the *Latter-day Digest* and Bookcraft<sup>8</sup>, which aspire to wide and near-official acceptance by church leaders and general Mormon readership" (236).

In casting the home literature movement as a failure, Mormon intellectuals alienate themselves from their largest potential audience---the LDS people (whether there is a national market for Mormon literature is still currently in the test stage). This is not to say literature can thrive while in the service of didacticism, but rather that when this literary movement is labeled as defective and then ignored (as it seems to be by many current critics and authors), something is lost---an exuberance, a desire to write for the community. But, of course, a failed movement also means that there is still uncharted space, a promise to live up to. Unfulfilled desire. The only problem is that while the intellectuals have forgotten, or ignore it, the memory of this literary period persists in the reading habits of so many Mormons.

### **The Lost Generation, 1930-70:**

---

<sup>8</sup> Deseret Book and Bookcraft are both Utah-based publishing houses. There is, of course, also a publishing house for the intellectuals, LDS agnostics, and dissidents--Signature. Although, like the main Mormon journals *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*, it is forum for a broad range of intellectuals, both active LDS and jack-Mormons (inactive LDS).

It is this period which splits many of the intellectuals (especially those who wrote fiction) from the main stream of Mormon culture. England characterizes this period as one "of reaction by third- and fourth-generation Mormons, usually well educated for their time, to what they saw as the loss of the heroic pioneer vision and a decline into provincial materialism, which impelled an outpouring of excellent but generally critical works, published and praised nationally but largely rejected or unknown to Mormons" (~22).

England borrows the label for this group from Edward A. Geary, whose 1977 essay "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s" traces the changes in Mormon culture that happened in the 1920s and 30s that led to an outpouring of Mormon fiction. These changes, the "ending of an era of Mormon isolation and self-sufficiency--the stagnation and decline of rural Mormondom," led to an exodus from Utah to California or the East, and meant for many "leaving the church, for they could not clearly separate their Mormonness from their Utahness nor their awareness of the economic stagnation of the region from a sense of the decline of the church" (Geary 25).

Most of the novels that emerge in this period, says Geary, "have their roots in the authors effort to come to terms with his or her Mormon heritage. These are expatriate novels. They resemble the works of the so-called 'lost generation' of American writers of the

1920s in their ambivalence in a tradition which seems to have failed, yet which still offers the only available spiritual anchor against a tide of meaninglessness" (26).

Since the great spirit of the foundational pioneer period has been diminished by provincialism and a narrowed social vision, as Geary points out, the central tension of most of these novels, which include, most notably, Maureen Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* and Virginia Sorenson's *The Evening and the Morning*, is located in the desires of the rebellious, skeptical protagonist to break free from the narrow constraints of his or her community and yet, at the same time, is not able, or entirely willing to let go. For the most part these novels take place in either the pioneer period or in the provincial life period (which runs parallel to the home literature movement).

While the novelists of the lost generation show greater technical skill than the home literature writers, their rejection of the LDS mainstream and the critique of Mormon culture that came with that rejection (which they paradoxically also sustain through their vivid portraits of pioneer and provincial life), divorced them (as England explains) from the general Mormon readership. Theirs is not a failure of technique, but of connection.

Geary points to an even more profound 'failure.' These writers, most of whom turn to secular humanism, believe that "with the end of the pioneer period, the heroes disappeared, to be replaced by men of

smaller souls and narrower vision--the church whose first adherents had expected to fill the earth became merely an odd sect in a remote and backward corner of the West" (29). This belief "is a dead-end interpretation of Mormon history" (29). This characterization of the lost generation of Mormon novelists sets the stage for a restoration of sorts, a recovery or renewal of cultural memory that had been arrested, placed in stasis.

### **Faithful Realism, 1960-Present:**

It didn't take long, of course, for Mormon literature to break out of its condition of stasis. England describes this fourth period of literary history this as "a slow growth and then flowering from the 1960s to the present of good work in all genres, combining the best qualities and avoiding the limitations of most past work, so that it is both faithful and critical, appreciated by a growing Mormon audience and also increasingly published and honored nationally" (~22).

This flowering begins with Clinton F. Larson, who, influenced by the work of T.S. Eliot and other modern poets, began writing poetry in the 1950s that while critical of Mormon culture and modern life, was grounded in Mormon theology and history. He also founded *BYU Studies*, the first Mormon scholarly journal in 1959, and regularly contributed to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, a journal founded in 1966 that regularly published poetry and fiction (England

45-46). During the 70s, Mormon drama and fiction (first short stories and then novels) began to take off. The first anthology of Mormon literature, *A Believing People*, was published in 1974. Reflective of Mormon literary history, it included sections of letters, essays, discourses, and journals along with more standard literary forms such as poetry, fiction, and drama. With the publication of the anthology came an actual course in Mormon literature taught at Brigham Young University by the anthology editors, Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert<sup>9</sup>.

The market for Mormon literature gained steam, exploding in the 80s. Most of the best selling books continue to be those written in the home literature vein, but even those works are improving, and certainly the survival of such alternative presses like Signature Books attests to the healthiness of the market for 'serious' fiction.

England calls this period "Faithful Realism," which seems to mean that the literature strives to realistically represent Mormon culture, but in a way that faithfully affirms LDS theology and is respectful of Mormon history. But while that remains an ideal for many writers, it doesn't paint the entire picture. The Mormon community remains divided and ambivalent. England recognizes this when he writes a couple of years ago: "Now Mormon letters seems increasingly

---

<sup>9</sup> The importance of such a course cannot be overestimated. It seems as if most of those who participate on the e-mail list for the Association of Mormon Letters took that course at some point or another, or was inspired by someone who did.

bifurcated into mutually exclusive forums, periodicals, and presses, which I fear will impede our progress toward the rich, diverse, mutually tolerant literary community and achievements we are capable of (~66)."

While the field has become increasingly complex, the best example of this bifurcation took place in the early 90s in an intellectual skirmish over the first anthology of Mormon poetry. In a review of the anthology, Richard Cracroft complained that the poetry seemed to be split into two sections. The first consisted of poems by older Mormon writers that Cracroft felt expressed Mormon experience and symbolism; the second group of poems (written by poets born after 1939) though seemed to Cracroft to "spring less from the spiritual and mythic roots of Mormonism than from the self-fascination of much contemporary poetry" (Review Cracroft, n. pag.). For Cracroft, these later poems "are testimonials of how the educated Mormon poet has assimilated the secular culture and modes of poetry, repressing and replacing soaring spirituality with earth-bound humanism."

Bruce W. Jorgensen, like Cracroft a BYU professor of literature, responded to Cracroft's critique in his 1991 farewell address as president of the Association of Mormon Letters. In his address, he warns against attempts to search for a Mormon essence and advocates listening to the 'other' and not judging superficially (60-61). He writes, "maybe Mormonism itself has no essence but only a story, which

comprises all the stories of all the agents who come upon Christ's invitations to action and offer to take them up" (61). This sounds suspiciously like all the stories told in letters and journals in the foundational days of Mormonism. While Jorgensen is referring more directly to literature produced by those outside or on the fringes of the mainstream LDS community, his attitude expresses a dilemma of Mormon literary history. If there is no search for essences, then how can the drive for an essential Mormon literature, the kind envisioned by Orson Whitney (and since re-envisioned by countless others), be sustained? Mormons will listen only to the stories told by those they are comfortable with (which is the opposite of what Jorgensen wants).

And this is what Richard Cracroft argues in a response to Jorgensen in his own farewell presidential address to the Association of Mormon Letters<sup>10</sup>. "If a work of literature is written by a Latter-day Saint and sails under the title 'Mormon,' it is, I believe, the duty of a Mormon literary critic to point out for the potential readership, which inevitably will be mostly Mormon, the presence or lack of such Mormonness," he replies (21). Mormon critics are responsible to the Mormon audience, an audience who do not have the lenses of secular humanism (which Cracroft labels the 'Sophic') with which to read a work of literature. "If we who are Mormon writer, critics, and

---

<sup>10</sup> Since this address is found only on the Mormon Literature Website, and doesn't list the year it was given, I haven't been able find the year the address was given. Obviously it was after Jorgensen's 1990 address. A follow-up response to both critics was published in 1994, so I would guess that Cracroft's address took place in 1991 or 1992.

publishers" he continues, "wish to speak to the Saints, we must speak to them through LDS metaphors. We cannot dismiss or belittle or patronize them merely because we have supplanted their metaphors or because they refuse to set their familiar metaphors aside" (ø14). Cracroft recognizes the stubborn persistence of ethno-symbols.

While the two positions taken by Cracroft and Jorgensen may be distressing to England, according to Anthony Smith, these disputes are not without precedence, and indeed help to further the cause of the ethnies: "Rival myths may push policy in different directions; but they also limit the options and present a circle of assumptions and dynamic impulses which help to raise the self-consciousness of ethnic members" (87).

While Jorgensen may argue against a Mormon essence, he still engages in criticism of Mormon authors and so must define at least some set of possible characteristics or positions of Mormonness. Meanwhile, as a Mormon critic, Cracroft can't ignore literary production done by Mormon authors who write in the Sophic mode because they change the field in which we works.

Indeed, a couple of years after this exchange, Gideon Burton, a younger critic, presented a paper at a conference of the Association of Mormon Letters where he tried to reconcile the two sides. He argues that Mormon criticism and literature should both be placed "within the encompassing frame of the Restoration" (~31). If that is done, "then

the two positions which Cracroft and Jorgensen represent---fidelity to the Mormon mythos and openness to otherness---become complementary and mutually interdependent necessities in a venture so significant it cuts across the lines of Mormon membership: the building of culture" (~9). Burton shows that the prophecy, the promise of Mormon literature will not be halted---because it has not yet been fulfilled. Mormon criticism, according to Burton, senses in a work an apostasy from truth and then "rectifies this falling away through an act of restoration" (~1). This criticism adds to the culture, a culture that continually is being used as the stuff of new literature. The dynamic impulses of both criticism and literature lead both to try and fill the void, a void that exists because there is not yet a 'great' Mormon literature. This is why each period of Mormon literary history carries with it its own failure, the memory of which pushes forward the next generation of writers. Is this not the power of prophecy? To project a future, a vacuum that must be filled with words and deeds; the prophecy itself moving forward along with the flow of history, existing as a memory of the past and yet also as a memory still to be made.

## Endnote A: Glossary

**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:** The official name of the denomination also known as 'the Mormons.' A world-wide church with over 10 million members founded in New England in 1830.

**LDS:** I use this term as an adjective to refer to views or characteristics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that are an official part of its structure and theology.

**The Saints:** The active members of the LDS Church. The term 'Saint' is used to refer to any member of the LDS Church and has a much different meaning than how it is used by other Christian denominations. In LDS theology, all members of the church are considered 'Saints' because they are all working towards acquiring the characteristics that Jesus Christ perfectly exemplified.

**Mormon:** Originally a term of derision used by outsiders, the term was used to refer to members of the LDS Church because of their belief in *The Book of Mormon*, a scriptural, historical account of Jews who migrated to the American continent around the time Jerusalem was invaded by the Babylonians. The book, translated by LDS Church founder Joseph Smith from plates of gold whose location was revealed to him by a heavenly messenger, along with the Bible and selected writings of Joseph Smith form the current (current because LDS theology leaves room for the canon to be added to) scriptural canon of the LDS Church. In its current usage, Mormon has taken on a variety of meanings, and like other terms that were originally derogatory, it has been appropriated by church members and for many is synonymous with LDS. However, I use it in a specific sense to refer to the community and culture that has developed in the states of the intermountain West (and to some extent California and the pacific north-west) since the Latter-day Saints were driven out of Illinois and began settling Utah in 1847. This is a culture that has changed and developed over the past 150 years and contains attitudes and practices that go beyond the core doctrine and modes of worship of the LDS Church. Because of the active proselyting work of the LDS Church, a majority of its members now live outside of the United States. While a worldwide LDS culture is beginning to develop (each nation and congregation, of course, forging its own variation), Mormon culture remains the dominant cultural force when it comes to artistic production and consumption because it is only in the western states that there is a large enough market to consume LDS-oriented art. This market includes Mormons who relate to the LDS Church in ways ranging from complete fidelity, healthy skepticism, passive or active

agnosticism, to outright hostility. It is in this market that Mormon literature mainly operates.

## Works Cited

Burton, Gideon. "Should We Ask, 'Is This Mormon Literature?' Towards a Mormon

Criticism." *The Association for Mormon Letters Annual, 1994* (Salt Lake City:

Association for Mormon Letters, 1994) 2:227-33. Rpt. Mormon Literature Website (n. pag.) Online. Available. [humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/gbask.htm](http://humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/gbask.htm).

Cracroft, Richard H. "The Didactic Heresy as Orthodox Tool: B.H. Roberts as Writer of

Home Literature." Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature. Eds. Lavina Fielding Anderson and Eugene England. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996. pp. 117-133.

---. "A Review of *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*." *BYU Studies* 30.2 (Spring

1990) pp. 119-123. Rpt. Mormon Literature Website (n. pag.) Online. Available. [humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/cracrevh.htm](http://humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/cracrevh.htm).

---. "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS

Literature." Mormon Literature Website (n. pag.) Online. Available.

[humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/attune.htm](http://humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/attune.htm).

England, Eugene. "Mormon Literature: Progress and Prospects." (n. pag.) Online.

Available. [humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/progress.htm](http://humanities.byu.edu/MLDB/progress.htm). NOTE: I have used the web version for this essay. Because it has had so many permutations, I include the editor's note on the web version outlining the essay's bibliographical history: [Editor's Note: This is the single most comprehensive essay on the history of Mormon Literature, originally appearing with the same title in David J. Whittaker, ed., *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States*. (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995): 455-505. It has been adapted slightly from its print version (with some updated bibliographic material and the addition of weblinks). An abbreviated version of this same essay may be found in Lavina Fielding Anderson and Eugene England, eds., *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1996). An earlier, seminal version is England's "The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature After 150 Years" *Brigham Young University Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 131-60, reprinted in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*. Ed. Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for

Western Studies, 1983): 97-146.]

Geary, Edward A. "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940's." *BYU*

*Studies* 18. (Fall 1977) pp. 89-98. Rpt. in *Anderson and England* 23-33.

Jorgensen, Bruce W. "To Tell and Hear Stories: Let the Stranger Say." *Anderson*

and *England*. 49-68.

Kimball, Spencer W. "The Gospel Vision of the Arts." *Ensign*. (July 1977, n. pag.)

Online. Available: [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org). [Note: The article can be found at this Website on a searchable database, but because it is searchable, a specific URL is not available.]

Mulder, William. "Mormonism and Literature." *Western Humanities Review* 9 (Winter

1954-55) pp. 85-89. Rpt. in *Cracroft and Lambert* 208-211.

---. "'Essential Gestures': Craft and Calling in Contemporary Mormon Letters." *Weber*

*Studies*. Winter 1993, Volume 10.3 (n. pag.). Online. Available: [weberstudies.weber.edu/archive/Vol.%2010.3/10.3Mulder.htm](http://weberstudies.weber.edu/archive/Vol.%2010.3/10.3Mulder.htm)

Smith, Athony D. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

Terdiman, Richard. "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing

Culture in France Since the Revolution." *Diacritics*. Winter, 1985. Vol 15. No. 4. pp. 13-36.

Whitney, Orson F. "Home Literature." 1888. *A Believing People: Literature of the*

*Latter-day Saints*. Comps. Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert. Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1974. 203-207.