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## Women In Utah History

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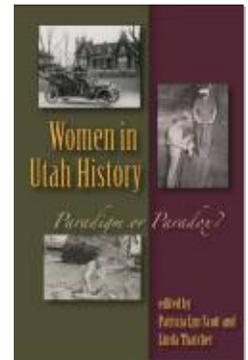
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## Women of Letters

### A Unique Literary Tradition

Gary Topping

All writers, no matter how imaginative their work, are affected to some degree by their environment; but defining those effects, positive or negative, creative or destructive, is always difficult and often impossible. Environmental effects can be paradoxical. Readily available patronage, for example, may result only in the proliferation of mediocrity, while thoroughly oppressive circumstances can produce a Dostoevski or a Dickens. Thus, while Utah's unique cultural circumstances have produced a unique literary tradition, it is possible to define that gestative process only partially and dimly.<sup>1</sup>

The harshness of frontier life, though poignantly present in early Utah, seems to have been generally less of a factor in inhibiting cultural development than elsewhere. An important factor was Mormonism's characteristic gregariousness. Mormon migration and colonization were movements of an entire society rather than a diffusion of individuals. Thus, while the poet behind the plow and the historian in the haymow were to be found on the Utah frontier as elsewhere, Mormon society from the beginning sought a degree of specialization that potentially included the arts, sciences, and letters. Occupying their own sphere within Mormonism's solidly patriarchal society, Mormon women organized an impressive array of clubs and organizations and participated in many with both male and female membership that supplemented the officially directed auxiliaries. Official or not, these groups became in major ways, culture bearers of Mormonism. Rare indeed was the community, even in the farthest-flung corners of Mormondom, that could not boast of a ladies' literary or debating club as well as a branch of the ubiquitous women's Relief Society by 1900. And of course the preponderance of women schoolteachers in Utah as elsewhere in nineteenth-century America gave Utah women, Mormon and Gentile alike, a vitally important role in the cultural life of the territory.



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Emmeline B. Wells (1828–1921) was a women's rights advocate and active in the women's suffrage movement, editor of the *Woman's Exponent*, and Relief Society general president for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.

Other institutions also encouraged cultural development. The difficulty of transportation made books highly prized commodities during the pioneer period, though the Territorial Library assembled by John R. Bernhisel and the libraries of certain individuals were impressive collections. Libraries began to proliferate more rapidly after the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, although it was not until statehood in 1896 that Salt Lake City undertook, as a government responsibility, the support of a public library.

Educational institutions were ambiguous in their encouragement of culture. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the Mormon-dominated school system was notoriously poor, though many Protestant mission schools with well-trained teachers were available even in remote communities by the 1870s. By the turn of the century, the Mormon Church was running several academies of higher learning, though with little distinction, while the University of Deseret, founded in 1850, had been mired in mediocrity until John R. Park, had assumed the presidency in 1869, and had begun to attract faculty members of merit.

The ready availability of publishing outlets for writers of all abilities was a conspicuous characteristic of Utah culture during the nineteenth century. While established eastern publishing houses seem to have been little interested

in native Utah talent except for exploitative exposés by apostate Mormons, prominent Utah women like Eliza R. Snow and Susa Young Gates were occasionally published in the East. Much more important, though, were the local outlets—the *Young Woman's Journal*, the *Woman's Exponent*, the *Relief Society Magazine*, and the local newspapers—often capably edited by women like Gates, Louisa (“Lula”) Greene Richards, and Emmeline B. Wells, who were constantly seeking publishable material in all genres.<sup>2</sup>

These cultural institutions and opportunities, while encouraging, did not produce a great flowering of literature in nineteenth-century Utah. The tight-knit community that allowed easy organization for group life also insured that group values would be those most often promulgated by its institutions and publications. The pious, the sentimental, and the conventional thrived at the expense of the original, the critical, and the creative. Also, many of the literary clubs and organizations were “literary” in name only, existing primarily to meet social needs. For example, the venerable Ladies’ Literary Club of Salt Lake City, founded in 1877 by wealthy non-Mormon women, held a particularly memorable meeting during the club’s early years. Mrs. Eliza Kirtley Royle, the club’s first president, said she could

think of no time when we made such advance in systematic and improved methods of literary work as we did that year. . . . It was there that three of our members gave us, one afternoon, a most delightful object lesson. Tea, coffee, and chocolate were the miscellaneous topics for discussion. Interesting and instructive papers were read by Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. G. Y. Wallace, and Mrs. Tuttle. We felt we had a feast of reason, when in came at the rear door, the flow of tea, coffee, and chocolate, served in the daintiest china and with most delicious cake.<sup>3</sup>

The “Arts and Crafts Section” of the club, founded in 1922, devoted its attention to making such things as lamp shades and lace work, while its historian reported in 1927 that its members “frequently indulge in the ‘cup that cheers.’” The club also “fostered creative talent,” sponsoring programs of original works and offering prizes to recognize local talent.<sup>4</sup>

The Utah Women’s Press Club, which lasted from 1891 to 1928, offered more promise as a vehicle for the improvement and encouragement of women writers. Primarily, though not exclusively Mormon in its membership, it was founded by Emmeline B. Wells to serve the needs of “women engaged in active journalistic or newspaper work.” Though none of its members became major literary figures, some of them—Wells, Susa Young Gates, Ellis Reynolds Shipp, and Ruth May Fox—were persons of solid intellectual ability and writers and editors of at least middling talent. Moreover, the agenda of the meetings included opportunities for criticism of each other’s work, and the nature of the membership provided contact between editors and those wishing to publish.<sup>5</sup>



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Eliza Roxcy Snow (1804–87), Relief Society general president, writer (books, poetry, church hymns), and acknowledged leader of Mormon pioneer women of the nineteenth century, n.d.

During the last decade of her life, Susa Young Gates (1856–1933) worked on an ambitious history of women in Utah. Although she left it unfinished, her chapter on women writers is illuminating. “In purely literary ventures,” she states, “women have certainly dominated the race for self-expression. There are less than a half-dozen men who have published books of verse or fiction. There are many such women authors.” She lists and critiques sixteen women writers in addition to herself who, to her mind, constituted the feminine literary heritage of Utah: Eliza Roxcy Snow, Hannah Tapfield King, Emily B. Spencer, Mary Jane Mount Tanner, Hannah Carnaby, Augusta Joyce Crocheron, Lula Greene Richards, Ellis R. Shipp, Reba Beebe Pratt, Emmeline B. Wells, Alice Merrill Horne, Nancy Norvell, Helen Mar Whitney, Aurelia Spencer Rogers, Lydia D. Alder, and Ruth May Fox.

From a late twentieth-century perspective, most of these women are minor lights. No more than three or four of the seventeen are read at all today. Some of them are more of historical than literary interest. The group is heavily weighted with poets (all but Gates, Norvell, Whitney, and Rogers); but none of

the poetry is memorable, and surviving names are remembered for something else: Tanner for her fine autobiography, Horne for her sponsorship of fine art, Rogers as founder of the Primary, Shipp for her medical career and memoirs, Wells as editor of the *Woman's Exponent*, and Fox as a suffragist and long-time general president of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association.

Although Gates was as positive about the group's achievement as possible, she obliquely admitted that the achievement was not beyond improvement, charitably blaming most of the shortcomings on external circumstances such as the frontier environment and heavy domestic obligations. Even the poems of the awesome Eliza R. Snow, "Zion's Poetess," whose piety and didactic purposes would seem to have paralleled Gates's own values most closely, required guarded apologies: "Uneven in poetic merit, they still bear the stamp of genius held down, at times, to rigid standards, or mayhap, forced into personal or practical channels to please friends and especially to convey abstract principles in verse to the youthful studious mind."<sup>6</sup>

The name of one female poet is missing from the list, no doubt because she married Gentile Jonathan M. Williamson, post doctor at Fort Douglas, and thus, perhaps, to the daughter of Brigham Young, was no longer a genuine Utah woman. The omission is most unfortunate, for unless some unknown literary genius comes to light, Sarah Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Carmichael (1838–1901) was by far the best Utah poet of the nineteenth century and perhaps the only one, by rigorous literary standards, authentically to deserve the designation of poet.<sup>7</sup>

Carmichael's parents were double cousins, a genetic heritage that caused some emotional instability. (A sister, Mary, was mentally retarded.) According to Miriam B. Murphy, Carmichael's biographer, she "went into a severe mental decline about a year after her marriage" and was seen in the 1890s at the state mental hospital in Provo.<sup>8</sup> Eliza R. Snow generously used her formidable powers to introduce her younger colleague to Brigham Young and boosted her along the road to publication. Carmichael's work survives mainly through sporadic appearances in the *Deseret News* and in a collection, *Poems* (San Francisco: Towne and Bacon, 1866), published in a limited edition "for private circulation" at her husband's insistence. Carmichael prefaces the book with a modest protest:

Ephemeral thing! Unwisely sought!  
Who dares to win a woman's thought?

The poems themselves deal with fairly conventional themes and are sometimes burdened with sentimental devices of Victorian poetry, but even her tributes to Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers are free of the formal piety of Eliza R. Snow, and one would have to reach almost as far as Walt Whitman to find more moving lines on Lincoln's death and the Civil War:



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Sarah Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) Carmichael (1838–1901) was a nineteenth-century poet who wrote on regional themes and nature as well as conventional topics. Sarah has been called the “best Utah poet of the nineteenth century.”

Tears were frozen in their sources,  
Blushes burned themselves away;  
Language bled through broken heart-threads,  
Lips had nothing left to say.

Regional and nature themes, too, played a major role in her poetry, in such haunting lines as:

Lake Tahoe, sweetest lake of lakes!  
The crescent moon oft overtakes  
And tramples on the soft white feet  
Of day . . . .<sup>9</sup>

Susa Young Gates dominated the literary world of turn-of-the-century Utah through her energetic personality, her influential editorial positions, and her prolific pen. Her place in Utah’s literary history is assured as author of the first novel on a Mormon subject written by a Mormon, *John Steven’s Courtship: A Story of the Echo Canyon War* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909). Her works are largely unread today; they are sadly dated, sentimental, and unremittingly didactic. Critic Paul Cracroft argues for the literary merit of her posthumous novel, co-authored with her daughter Leah Eudora Dunford Widtsoe, *The Prince of Ur* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), claiming that

her didactic intensity called forth her greatest literary power in her essays and editorials.<sup>10</sup>

As Utah moved into the twentieth century, new cultural influences helped to create a literature of much greater maturity. After the demise of polygamy (1890–1911) and the achievement of statehood in 1896, Utah moved toward the mainstream of American life. While permanently retaining many uniquely Mormon institutions and folkways, Utah strongly and patriotically embraced middle-class American culture. For Utah writers this meant that the Mormon Church was no longer their dominant literary seedbed even though it would always have its own form of “home literature” in its own magazines. Instead more critical rigor developed a willingness to look at the culture of Mormonism rather than the faith as a source for literary exploration and also produced greater sophistication in literary techniques.

The development of higher education undoubtedly influenced literary development. At the University of Utah, for example, the presidency of Dr. John R. Park (1869–92) marked the beginning of independence from church domination and solid commitment to high academic standards.<sup>11</sup> Bernard DeVoto, on one end of the spectrum, found that commitment less than perfectly realized, while Wallace Stegner, in contrast, characterized himself during his student years in Utah as “happy as shrimp in cocktail sauce.”<sup>12</sup> By the time of the Great Depression and World War II, the University of Utah’s English faculty included Vardis Fisher and Stegner. They have been followed in the last half of the twentieth century by such nationally important scholars, writers, and teachers as Brewster Ghiselin, Clarice Short, David Kranes, and even national Poet Laureate Mark Strand. Similar qualitative improvements have characterized Utah’s other institutions of higher learning.

Women writers sprang forth in abundance during the 1940s, almost certainly because of the disruptive effects of the Great Depression and World War II on traditional gender roles. Maurine Whipple, Blanche Cannon, Virginia Sorensen, Fawn Brodie, and Juanita Brooks, among others, emerged during that decade—a development scarcely paralleled in the male realm. These women’s writings document a cultural phenomenon of major proportions.

For example Blanche Cannon’s *Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1948) shows a degree of detachment in interpreting Mormon culture that would probably have been impossible for an earlier generation. The thesis implicit in the title is that even trivial events have deep historical antecedents, and Cannon uses extensive flashbacks in the minds of the major characters. The story takes place during fast Sunday morning (the first Sunday of the month when, instead of regular assigned sermons, the time is spent in spontaneous “testimony-bearing”) in a typical Mormon town named Lakeview in 1900. These flashbacks reveal a tyrannical and hypocritical father, Bishop Eben Benson, his oppressed wife and children, and the frustration and yearnings of two of those children for independence and exposure to a wider world.

Benson treats his wife, Matilda, as a servant; she has no life apart from the responsibilities of home and family and suffers unremitting humiliation in support of his business and church ambitions. Unable to find even enough of a chink in his cold personality to announce her first pregnancy, she bears her child while Eben is in England on a mission and endures the blow of receiving Eben's pretty second wife who travels home ahead of him. She learns only later of their relationship.

As a father, Benson tries to eradicate the individualism of his children, driving each to find a way to retain his or her own dignity. The two younger sons, "had little to do with him. They obeyed him without question, and although they seemed to feel no fear of him, they never played when he was in the room." A younger daughter, Elspeth, "never seemed to be naughty but she never seemed to be obeying the rules either. She went her own way, according to some law of her own."<sup>13</sup>

But it is the two older children, Jasper and Margaret, upon whom the story focuses. Both have yearnings for a fuller life beyond Lakeview and the Mormon Church. Margaret becomes infatuated with a vagabond hired man whom we know simply as "Jonathan," a free-thinking radical with a knapsack full of poetry and atheism. She tries to get him to remain with her in Lakeview, unwittingly revealing her perception of the shallowness of her father's religion: "Can't you see, Jonathan, if you'll go to church a few times, it won't matter what books you read, or even what you think in your own mind? They wouldn't understand about those things, anyway. But if they saw you at church they'd forget what they believed about you, and soon they'd think you were just like everybody else."<sup>14</sup> Jonathan agrees to meet her in church on that fateful fast day but instead leaves in the middle of the night, devastating her hopes.

Jasper's lot is more tragic than a broken heart. His contact with the outside world is Dr. Robinson, a Gentile professor at Brigham Young University which he attends for a year. Robinson, impressed with Jasper's intellectual abilities, offers to help get him into Harvard if he can get his father's permission and assistance. Jasper puts in a dutiful year in Eben's hardware store earning his tuition, but falls in love with Ellie Dickerson, daughter of the town drunk. She becomes pregnant. The biggest "happening" on that Sunday morning when "nothing happens" is Ellie's forced confession of her sin in front of the entire community and a visiting apostle; but she refuses to name her child's father, and Jasper lacks the backbone to proffer his own confession. Thus Eben Benson is ultimately triumphant: Jasper is so submerged by his father's personality that he cannot make a moral choice, to admit his love for the disgraced Ellie Dickerson, and find his own way to Harvard.

*Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning* is strongly reminiscent of Edith Wharton, whose works Blanche Cannon taught while a faculty member at the University of Utah. Even more, though, it is rooted in Cannon's own experience and knowledge of small-town Mormon culture. The story originated, she says,

as a short story including only the church confession episode. After seeing a polygamist house like the one described in the novel, she began to fill out the social and emotional elements, adding the character of Jasper from the experiences of one of her mother's brothers, and the character of Eben from that of her own grandfather.<sup>15</sup> Richard Scowcroft, reviewing the book, said he almost regretted, for Cannon's sake, that she had chosen to use Mormon culture as the milieu for such a fine story, fearing that readers would be distracted from seeing her expert handling of larger human themes by her critique of that culture.<sup>16</sup> Actually, one could no more remove the Mormonism from her novel than one could remove the New England from Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (New York: Scribner, 1911). Only an unsophisticate would regard either work as of only regional significance.

*Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning* is Cannon's only published novel. Her publisher rejected a second manuscript "Twentieth Century Gothic," and "she ran out of enthusiasm" for it, both for literary and personal reasons. She confesses that she "dislikes the tiresome chores" of seeing a book through the publication process, particularly a novel, which takes "second place to drama" in her interests. When her husband's health suggested a move to a gentler climate, Cannon took early retirement from the university and has written little since.<sup>17</sup>

Blanche Cannon's career almost begs for comparison with that of Maurine Whipple, if only because both began writing at about the same time and each produced only one novel, each published by a national publisher. Beyond those facts, though, the similarities rapidly decrease both in number and significance. Whipple's fine novel, *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1941) is a very different book from *Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning*; it is much longer, and much less tightly focused on a single type of conflict. Like *Nothing Ever Happens*, *The Giant Joshua* deals centrally with the theme of the oppression of women and free spirits under Mormonism's patriarchal, polygamous society, but it is historical, while Cannon's was contemporary in setting, and has a sentimental and optimistic conclusion, in contrast to Cannon's tragic and pessimistic ending.

*The Giant Joshua* is the story of the founding and early development of St. George, where Maurine Whipple was born in 1904 and where she spent virtually her entire life. Her family, by her account, could offer little in financial support or encouragement, and she was forced to take sporadic and low-paying jobs as a housekeeper and dance instructor while writing in off hours. During a period of recuperation from illness, she wrote a thirty-thousand-word novella, "Beaver Dam Wash," which attracted the attention of Ford Madox Ford at a writers' conference. Ford put her in touch with editor Ferris Greenslet of Houghton Mifflin, who encouraged her to submit samples from a more ambitious work in application for the 1938 Houghton Mifflin Fellowship. Her outline and sample chapters from *The Giant Joshua* won the

fellowship of \$1,500, which supported her meagerly until she could finish the book.

*The Giant Joshua* was widely and favorably reviewed and remains to this day a classic novel of the Mormons. Though it has never been out of print and has appeared in paperback and foreign editions, Miss Whipple claims not to have experienced much financial success. Her 1945 picture book, *This Is the Place, Utah* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945) and appearances in slick magazines like *Collier's* and *Saturday Evening Post* were likewise not sufficiently remunerative to sustain a more productive literary career. Whipple promised two more novels to form a trilogy with *The Giant Joshua*, but the promise was unfulfilled.<sup>18</sup>

*The Giant Joshua's* point of view character is Clorinda McIntyre, the youngest of three plural wives of Abijah McIntyre, a thoroughly orthodox and insensitive tyrant cut from the same mold as Blanche Cannon's Eben Benson. Polygamy produces little more happiness for Clorinda McIntyre than for Matilda Benson; as the last of McIntyre's wives, she is also last in line for the meager creature comforts and emotional rewards that McIntyre and frontier St. George can afford. The arrogant and superstitious Bathsheba, McIntyre's first and therefore senior wife, and surely one of the most memorable harpies in all literature, is Clory's leading tormentor.

The density of historical detail effectively brought to fictional life and integrated with the plot is perhaps the novel's strongest contribution. The settlement of the lower Virgin River valley by the "Cotton Mission" is one of Mormondom's most successful and best documented colonization enterprises. That consciousness of historical importance and that abundance of documentation has produced some of Utah's finest historians—e.g., Nels Anderson, Juanita Brooks, and Andrew Karl Larson. Maurine Whipple, as author of arguably the finest novel based on Utah local history, is their literary counterpart. Historical characters, particularly Erastus Snow, are well developed both imaginatively and historically, and the frustrating and exhausting attempts of the community to cope with both the treacherous Virgin River and the seemingly insensitive expectations of the Mormon leaders from Salt Lake City are portrayed with both suspense and sympathy.

If *The Giant Joshua* has a flaw, it is perhaps in the central character, Clory McIntyre. Like Jasper and Margaret in *Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning*, Clory is a youthful free spirit who yearns for escape to a less stifling existence outside small-town Utah. She falls in love briefly with her husband's oldest son (symbolically named "Free"), who is also chafing against Abijah's tyranny, but their possibility of escape is dashed by his death during a skirmish with Indians. She tries to escape on her own but repeatedly finds ways to reconcile herself to her lot and remain. It is her grounds for reconciliation that seem unconvincing. On one occasion, for example, she has actually made a successful getaway when she is arrested by the overwhelming beauty of a field of

wildflowers near her home and decides that she wants to remain in that pleasing environment. Whipple renders Clory's personal sufferings at the hands of Abijah and Bathsheba and her sharing in the collective sufferings of the community too poignantly to allow the reader to accept such a momentary emotion as a sufficient motive for returning.

In the end, then, *The Giant Joshua* is sentimental. Historically, it was the solid Mormon faith of the St. George pioneers that enabled them to make a success out of the most unpromising prospects. Clory is not devoid of faith; and for various reasons, her faith grows during the course of the novel, but Whipple has made the reasons for Clory's dissatisfaction so much more concrete than her reasons for reconciliation that her eventual acceptance of the community and her role in it seem artificial.

Of all the Utah women novelists who matured during the 1940s, Virginia Sorensen was certainly the most prolific. She strikes one as being in many ways the best writer of the group, although this is partly because she wrote enough to develop and display her impressive talent like none of the others.<sup>19</sup> With nine adult books and seven children's stories to her credit, one has ample opportunity to assess her abilities and to measure her contribution to Utah culture.

Sorensen's biography offers numerous clues for understanding her development as a writer.<sup>20</sup> Her ancestors included Danish Mormon handcart pioneers who settled in central Utah, although her family, as she remembered it, was loosely rooted there. Her father was a railroad man who was transferred from one station to another several times during her youth, so she had an opportunity to experience rather more variety in life than many other Mormon children who were rooted in one rural settlement. As a small-town Mormon girl who grew up and traveled the world, Sorensen knew Stanford as well as Brigham Young University, Tangiers as well as Provo, Utah. Such exposure gave her writing a cosmopolitan perspective. Though she considered herself a serious novelist, there is a distance between her and the church of her upbringing that introduces an objectivity, rather a skepticism, that is refreshing in the context of Mormon literature.

Sorensen's themes include the problems of Danish immigrants adapting to an alien culture, the ways in which daily realities temper religious idealism, the tensions between small-town complacency and the yearning for a wider world, and the achievement of maturity out of adolescence. She develops these themes in her novels with an occasional poignant lyricism, an expert narrative skill, a solid grasp of history, and considerable psychological insight.

*A Little Lower Than the Angels* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), her first novel, reveals many of these skills already highly developed. It is the story of a Mormon couple, Simon and Mercy Baker, in Nauvoo, Illinois, in the months spanning the assassination of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. The historical background is sketched in considerable detail but well integrated with the plot.

One learns about the shaky land titles, the city's geography, the personalities of Joseph Smith, John F. Bennett, Eliza R. Snow, and other historical figures, and especially the domestic and political tensions caused by the institution of polygamy. Into the character of Mercy Baker, the harried, exploited, and poorly appreciated Mormon wife, Sorensen poured much of the frustration, deeply felt but rarely expressed, in the souls of Mormon women. Simon's conversion to Mormonism is much more enthusiastic than Mercy's; in fact, she delays her baptism until pressure from the redoubtable Eliza R. Snow makes up her mind. Even so, Mercy's reasons for accepting baptism are anything but religious, and the scene where it occurs is remarkable for its absence of religious phraseology: "She tried to catch hold of the idea, the depth of idea that declared a man was purified and dedicated by the holy water upon his flesh. But this muddy water with a fish-smell in it sullied the idea and it escaped her while she struggled to hold it."<sup>21</sup>

Mercy's love for Simon leads her to accept his religion. It also leads to repeated pregnancies that take a heavy toll on her frail constitution and eventually lead to complete physical breakdown and death. As Mercy becomes increasingly worn out, Simon comes under pressure to make the ultimate commitment to Mormonism by taking another wife. But polygamy represents the ultimate humiliation for Mercy, who fights back with pathetic little acts of defiance, before yielding to the wishes of Simon and his church.

The characters of Eliza R. Snow and Joseph Smith, as well as their polygamous entanglement, are memorably developed. Sorensen makes a surprisingly good defense of Eliza's poetry: "Iambics as crisp as a pair of starched shams, and rhythms so sure and obvious there'd be no changing them in this world or another. Popey couplets, careful as egg-walking." And the departure of Joseph Smith, the empire builder, from Nauvoo the Beautiful, the city of his creation, is one of the unforgettable passages in Mormon literature: "Once he almost turned his head, as though he would have liked to look back yet again, but deliberately he held his face forward. With great effort he kept his back toward Nauvoo, because Nauvoo could make him soft and make him remember days that were better forgotten. Nauvoo had given him the power and the glory, she had almost given him the kingdom."<sup>22</sup> When Smith returns to Nauvoo at the beginning of the next chapter, he is in a coffin.

Sorensen's *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963) is one of the truly delightful pieces of small-town Americana to emerge from Utah. It is a collection of stories based on her Manti girlhood. The stories are tied together by two threads: the varied aspects of rural Mormon village life and personality types, and the gradual emergence of the author from childhood to adolescence. One story deals with the theme, hardly comprehensible outside of arid Utah, of the murder of a man who cheated on his turn at the irrigation water, a murder that was ruled justifiable homicide. Others deal with the imperfect adaptation of the Danish

Mormon converts to the ways of Mormon culture, particularly their aversion to the Mormon “Word of Wisdom”—the prohibition of alcoholic drinks and the Danes’ beloved coffee. “Polygamy and the Word of Wisdom,” one character retorts, “—we Danes didn’t take to either one.” What they could not change, they simply ignored: “Over their cups, Utah Danes had a gentler rejoinder to those unfortunate orthodox who sniffed unappreciative noses: ‘Brother Joseph never meant that Word of Wisdom for the Danes!’”<sup>23</sup>

Sorensen’s heroes and heroines live on the fringe of Mormonism, the frontier between orthodox complacency and overt heresy, between placid acceptance of the established order and open rebellion. Chel Bowen, heroine of *On This Star* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), is caught between the stable, mundane life of her Mormon fiancé and the exciting life of his half-brother (their mothers were plural wives of the same man), a concert pianist and comfortable denizen of the eastern cultural scene. Kate Jackson, of *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1949), is an apostate who forces her granddaughter to come to grips with her Mormon past with a tongue-in-cheek defense of polygamy (“polygyny,” she calls it, giving it its correct term).<sup>24</sup> It is the place where the greatest tensions exist and the greatest human dramas in Mormondom are possible, and Sorensen knows every crack and crevice intimately. She knows the ambiguous legacy of Mormon history, and she knows the multitude of revisions and compromises necessary in living its principles in the heartland of the church—rural Utah.

The works of Cannon, Whipple, and Sorensen all reveal the supreme importance of history in Mormon culture and literature. Mormonism is a historical religion in a way that even traditional Christianity cannot claim, historical though it is. Though the earliest records of Christianity claim to be historical, they are much more clouded in myth and dogma than the early records of the Mormon Church. The life of Joseph Smith took place fully in the bright light of history, and the rest of the course of church history is equally well documented. Mormons define themselves through their history perhaps more than traditional Christians, and it is through historical works that some of the most searching explorations of Mormonism have been accomplished.

Probably the most controversial historian to come out of Utah has been Fawn McKay Brodie (1915–81). An important pioneer in the field of “psychobiography,” Brodie wrote much-admired, much-maligned, and especially much-read books on Joseph Smith, Thaddeus Stevens, Richard Burton, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Nixon. Several are available in paperback editions and have been widely discussed, not only among historians, but among members of other professional disciplines and the general reading public.

Psychobiography is the application of psychoanalytic techniques to historical evidence in an attempt to delineate more elaborate motivational forces than can be discovered merely through a study of external behavior and rational statement. Sigmund Freud himself, in studies of Woodrow Wilson



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Fawn M. Brodie (1915–81), author of the controversial *No Man Knows My History* and *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of his Character*. She was a professor in the history department at the University of California at Los Angeles, n.d.

and Leonardo Da Vinci, was an early practitioner of the method, which in subsequent years has been more commonly applied to European historical figures than American; Erik Erikson's studies of Luther and Gandhi, and the works of Philippe Aries are well known examples. In the field of American psychobiography, the works of Fawn Brodie are perhaps most prominent.

Psychobiography requires a highly developed sensitivity to the pregnant nuance in the available evidence, a sensitivity that must be honed through deep reading in psychoanalytical literature and an extraordinary maturity of judgment in interpreting such evidence in order not to make too much nor too little of it in delineating the full personality of the subject. Since psychobiographers characteristically utilize minute scraps of evidence previously overlooked or dismissed by traditional historians, critics tend to see them as imbalanced and given to overemphasizing trivial facts. Brodie's work has been a lightning rod for such criticism, and she has been careful to acknowledge, in the face of her scanty evidence, the lack of finality in her conclusions. In the preface to the revised edition of her biography of Joseph Smith, for example, she reminds her readers that the book "is not intended to be a comprehensive clinical portrait, which

would have to be the work of a professional based on much more intimate knowledge of the man than is presently available.”<sup>25</sup>

Brodie was a member of one of the first families of Mormondom; her uncle, David O. McKay, became president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Born in the town of Huntsville, she received a fairly conventional Mormon upbringing, but exposure to a wider world of ideas and experience at the University of Utah led to a reexamination of her Mormon faith and background. That reexamination heightened after her marriage to Bernard Brodie, a non-Mormon Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago. The existence in the university library of a substantial collection of Mormon literature and New York state historical material helped her to focus her investigation on the obvious locus of Mormonism, its founder and prophet, Joseph Smith. The appearance in 1945 of her biography of Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, brought her fame within the historical profession and infamy among her family and fellow Mormons, eventually leading to her excommunication.<sup>26</sup>

The controversy over *No Man Knows My History* will never be resolved because, as Brodie observed in a 1975 interview, it hinges on a fundamental disagreement between Mormon and non-Mormon historians on what constitutes a fact.<sup>27</sup> Mormon historians, of course, are willing to accept Smith's evaluation of himself and his experiences at more or less face value, while Brodie prefers to read them as rationalizations of a quite different reality. Brodie's thesis is that Smith evolved from a highly intelligent, impressionable, and imaginative boy into a personality type known to psychoanalysts as “The Imposter”—specifically, that he began his career as something of a prank, but the impressive acceptance his ideas gained gradually deluded him into believing, quite sincerely, his own pronouncements. His success as a prophet was a result of his great personal magnetism combined with an impressive ability to sense cultural anxieties and aspirations and to codify them into a more or less consistent worldview and ecclesiastical structure. It is a fully secular interpretation of Smith's life, and one need not wonder that it so exasperated and enraged faithful Mormon readers.

Brodie subsequently made several minor contributions to Mormon and Utah history, but *No Man Knows My History* is her only major work in those fields. In later years, as a faculty member at the University of California at Los Angeles, she published psychobiographical studies of Thomas Jefferson and Richard Nixon that brought her wider national recognition than she had previously known, but consideration of Brodie as a Utah writer must be confined mainly to her Smith biography. Its effect on Utah and Mormon scholars was mighty, and perhaps best summarized in a posthumous tribute by Sterling McMurrin:

Because of *No Man Knows My History*, Mormon history produced by Mormon scholars has moved toward more openness, objectivity, and honesty. For the past half century Mormon religious thought has been in decline, but since the

forties the Mormon treatment of Church history has greatly improved . . . because among the historians there has been more honesty, a more genuine commitment to the pursuit of truth, and greater courage in facing criticism or even condemnation. Numerous factors determine such things, but quite surely in this case the honesty and courage of Mrs. Brodie have been among the most important.<sup>28</sup>

Brodie and her friend and contemporary, Juanita Brooks, represent equal competence, though opposite poles of fame and influence. Of all the women historians of Utah, Brooks's career was far more typical in its concentration on local records and themes and in its basic support of the Mormon Church. Brooks was the epitome of the local Utah historiographic tradition, though she far surpassed, in mastery of sources and of critical sophistication, the vast majority of her colleagues.

Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks was born in Bunkerville, Nevada, in 1898. She was the granddaughter of Dudley Leavitt, one of the first pioneers of Utah's "Dixie," the region encompassed by the Mormon "Cotton" and "Muddy" Missions in southern Utah and Nevada, and she was related by blood or marriage to many other families who settled that region. Her early interest in the history of her family and the region in which they lived developed and expanded to become her life's work. She is still considered the foremost authority on the history of southern Utah.

Although Brooks made her reputation as a historian, most of her formal education was in the field of English language and literature. After graduating from Virgin Valley High School in Bunkerville in 1916, she attended Dixie Junior College in St. George, then Brigham Young University, from which she graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1925. She returned to Dixie to teach English and serve as its dean of women from 1925 to 1933. She took leave during the 1928–29 school year to complete her master's degree at Columbia University.

Her first marriage ended in 1920, a year after it began, when her husband, Ernest Pulsipher, died of throat cancer, leaving her with a baby son. She determinedly completed her college and graduate work as a widowed mother. The experience demanded a high degree of discipline, a discipline that made possible her later career as a historian, for she wrote most of her later outpouring of books, articles, and edited documents while caring for a large family by her second marriage. In 1933 she retired from teaching at Dixie to marry the local sheriff, William Brooks. Brooks had four sons from a previous marriage, and together they had four more children.<sup>29</sup> Rising well before daylight, she wrote for several hours before preparing breakfast for her family, then crowded in whatever writing time she could during busy days as a housekeeper and active church woman.

It was during these years, 1933–50, however, that Juanita Brooks's career as a historian developed, beginning with her project of collecting and

The University of Utah awarded Juanita Brooks (1898–1989) an honorary doctorate of humane letters, June 2, 1973.



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transcribing manuscript diaries and other sources in southern Utah and culminating with the publication of her classic study *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1950; rev. ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.). The manuscript collecting project grew out of her earlier interest in the history of her region but began in earnest when sociologist Nels Anderson, who lived at the time across the street from her in St. George, suggested that federal funds from New Deal relief programs might be

available. With grants first from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and later from the Works Progress Administration's Historical Records Survey, Brooks hired several local women as typists who worked in her spare bedroom. Will Brooks's position as the man who knew everyone in Washington County opened many doors for Juanita on her manuscript collecting forays. Before long the quantity and quality of the work done on her project began to attract wider attention. One of the most fruitful results of Brooks's reputation during the project was a deep and long-lasting friendship with Dale L. Morgan, then director of the WPA Federal Writers' Project in Utah. He was beginning to attract national attention as a first-rate historian with a consuming zeal for accuracy, an appetite for hard work, and a graceful literary style—all qualities that came to characterize Brooks's work as well.<sup>30</sup>

During the 1930s, an almost constant stream flowed from her typewriter, practically all of which demonstrated an unparalleled depth of acquaintance with the sources for southern Utah history and an equally unparalleled objectivity and maturity of interpretation. But it was the appearance in 1950 of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* that established her reputation. Her interest in that dark episode dated from her girlhood acquaintance with Nephi Johnson, one of the central participants, and his terrifying death when he deliriously recalled that day. During the intervening years, she quietly began to collect notes and sources relating to the massacre, and her book, particularly in its revised version (1962) remains the definitive account.

The book blames the heightened passions of the Mormon Reformation, the Utah War, and the overreaction of the stake leadership at Cedar City for the massacre—rather than Brigham Young (as skeptical Gentiles had always suspected) or John D. Lee (whom the Mormon Church singled out as the sole scapegoat to avoid further investigation). It seems a moderate, reasonable interpretation. For southern Utah Mormons, though, who had avoided all discussion of the event for almost a century, the book pricked sensitive folk and family memories; and Brooks, even though she was a loyal and active Mormon before and after, suffered considerable ostracism in her community.

A great deal of her research for *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* took place during a long association with the Henry E. Huntington Library as a manuscript collector and later as a researcher. Her acquaintance with the John D. Lee sources at that institution and with the Lee family led her to follow her Mountain Meadows Massacre book with a biography of *John Doyle Lee: Zealot—Pioneer Builder—Scapegoat* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1961). She has also edited for publication the diaries of Lee, Thomas D. Brown, Hosea Stout, and other important pioneers of southern Utah.

During the 1950s Brooks returned to teaching at Dixie College while still devoting a large part of her time to the numerous requests to speak at academic functions and meetings of historical societies. During the 1960s she held a staff position at the Utah State Historical Society while she edited the

Helen Z. Papanikolas (1917–2004) was the daughter of Greek immigrants. She was the editor of the University of Utah's literary magazine, *Pen*, and did pioneering work on ethnic history and folklore, which broadened Utah history to include a fuller understanding of Utah's industrial development and the contributions of ethnic communities.



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Hosea Stout diary. After her retirement in St. George, she continued to publish, but the books of her retirement years were manuscripts written many years previously and published with the editorial assistance of others, such as her biography of Jacob Hamblin and her autobiography, *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1982). Brooks died in 1989.

Helen Zeese Papanikolas (1917–2004) is another important Utah historian.<sup>31</sup> A daughter of a self-made Greek grocer in Carbon County, she moved to Salt Lake City with her family as a teenager and was educated at East High School and the University of Utah. Motivated initially by a desire to serve her community as a medical doctor, she took an undergraduate degree in bacteriology, but her literary gift was discovered by English professor Sidney W. Angelman, and she worked for a time as associate editor of *Pen*, the University of Utah's literary magazine. Marriage to businessman Nick E. Papanikolas in 1941 and subsequent parenthood did not diminish her desire to write. Although she published an excerpt from a novel manuscript in an early issue of *Utah Humanities Review*, she delayed writing fiction in favor of recording and interpreting the experience of Utah's ethnic minorities. Blessed with a graceful writing style and a penetrating intellect, Papanikolas has enriched Utah historiography by bringing the viewpoints of women, non-Mormons, and ethnic minorities to prominence—none of which had conspicuously characterized the state's historical literature before her participation.

As creator and patron of the Peoples of Utah Institute at the University of Utah, she has been in the forefront of collecting and preserving records and reminiscences of Utah ethnic minorities. She also served long terms on the Board of State History. Much of her best work has been published by the Utah State Historical Society in the form of articles in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* and what is perhaps her crowning achievement as a historian, the Bicentennial collection of essays on *Peoples of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1976).<sup>32</sup> In her later years, she returned to her first love, fiction, publishing *Small Bird Tell Me: Stories of Greek Immigrants in Utah* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1993); *The Apple Falls from the Apple Tree: Stories* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1996) and *The Time of the Little Black Bird* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 2000).

Compared to fiction and historiography, poetry has been neglected to a large degree until recently among Utah writers. Kate Thomas, early in the century, gained some fame through her appearances in Mormon women's magazines and may be considered to have followed the tradition of Eliza Snow as a popular and pietistic poet. Though Thomas never developed into a major talent, her skill as a poet is clearly revealed in her famous works and matured in the nature and love poems in her unpublished notebooks.<sup>33</sup> Few other women poets of any significance emerged until the literary awakening among Utah women during World War II, and even then, only slowly.

One can hardly avoid being struck by two prominent themes among the poets who have matured since that time: a relative distaste for conventional piety and a profound interest in the land, both the cultivated soil and the virgin back country. The religious element is especially interesting. Among those poets for whom conventional religion has no vital appeal, religious themes are dealt with in a secular and skeptical manner, but few Utah women writers have found it possible to ignore them altogether. Even those whose affiliation with the Mormon Church is still close choose, it seems, to emphasize those elements in Mormon dogma that stress the finitude of God and the element of free moral choice—themes that are most in keeping with modern secular values.

Though fully within the bounds of Mormon doctrine, there is an emphasis in such poetry that one would likely not have found in Eliza R. Snow: the idea that intellectual freedom could lead to heresy as well as to orthodoxy, and the idea that a finite God, one of the central points of Mormon doctrine, might lead not only to the hope that man could himself become God, but also to meaningless tragedy, indeed, to despair.

One gets even less religious certitude in the poems of May Swenson (1913–89), a Logan-reared poet who became a highly respected figure in the New York literary scene.<sup>34</sup> After graduating from Utah State Agricultural College in 1934, Swenson worked for the *Deseret News* for a year, then went to New York City to seek her literary fortune. While working as an editor at

*New Directions*, she published a long string of poems in the *New Yorker*, most of which were eventually collected in her eleven volumes of poetry. Although she received awards from many sources, including the Guggenheim, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations, her greatest honor perhaps was the MacArthur Foundation fellowship of \$375,000 which she received in 1987. A poet of joy rather than of tragedy, Swenson couched her religious skepticism in witty and lighthearted verse. Since 1997 Utah State University has honored Swenson with the annual "May Swenson Poetry Award."

Religious poetry by Utah women outside the Mormon tradition achieved its highest mark in the work of Sister Mary Madeleva Wolff, principal of Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden and founder of St. Mary of the Wasatch in Salt Lake City. Born in a Wisconsin lumber town in 1887, Sister Madeleva was a precocious, though rebellious, girl who was translating Latin poets and Goethe while a high school senior.<sup>35</sup> As a student at the University of Wisconsin, she became attracted to the religious life, joined the Holy Cross order, and completed an M.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 1919. That same year she was sent to Ogden to teach English and act as principal of Sacred Heart Academy. Eventually she earned a Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, and even studied with C. S. Lewis during a sabbatical at Oxford in 1933. While most of Sister Madeleva's poetry expresses her fervent Catholic faith, some of her verses reveal a love for the Utah outdoors acquired on long hikes with her students, and expressed in sensual language.

Phyllis McGinley (1905–78) was the daughter of a peripatetic land speculator, but she settled in Ogden at age twelve when her father died, studied at Sacred Heart Academy, Ogden High School, and graduated from the University of Utah.<sup>36</sup> After selling some early poems, she moved to New York City, where she married in 1937 and wrote for numerous magazines, including the *New Yorker*. Her early reputation rested upon her light verse. One of her twenty volumes of poetry, *Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades with Seventy New Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), won a Pulitzer Prize.

However, McGinley perhaps attracted her greatest notoriety as a spokesperson for a conservative role for women during the feminist movement in the 1960s. *Sixpence in Her Shoe* (1964) was a response to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), which claimed that a college-educated woman could never hope to find fulfillment in a domestic setting. As "a kind of autobiography," McGinley's best-selling *Sixpence* demonstrated that keeping house for a husband and two daughters was by no means inconsistent with her writing career. "By temperament I am a nest builder," she asserted, ". . . to keep a house is my native vocation and I consider it an honorable estate."<sup>37</sup>

Turning to the contemporary scene, Utah can boast of such an outpouring of literary talent that one can attempt no more than a discussion of a few rather arbitrarily chosen representatives and hope for the emergence



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Miriam B. Murphy (1977) served as associate editor of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* for many years. She also authored books, poems, and articles on Utah history.

of a literary historian with more space at his or her disposal than this chapter. Salt Lake City remains Utah's cultural as well as its political capital, and writers like contemporary Mormon poet Emma Lou Thayne still live and write here.<sup>38</sup> So does Miriam B. Murphy, an enormously talented poet, editor, and historian whose excessive modesty alone has kept her from a reputation outside Utah's literary *cognoscenti*. During a quarter century as associate editor of *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Murphy has helped dozens of young historians, male and female alike, to find an outlet and a style for their writing, while contributing many pieces of her own, both prose and poetry, to that and other publications. Besides authoring numerous articles for the *Quarterly* and *Beehive History*, Murphy is the author of *A History of Wayne County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society/Wayne County Commission, 1999); *That Green Light That Lingers: Poems* (Salt Lake City: City Art, 2001), and the epic poem "Keenings and Intermezzi on a Crystallization of Time: The Mine Disaster at Castle Gate, Utah, March 8, 1924," included in Thomas Lyon and Terry Tempest Williams, eds., *Great and Peculiar Beauty: A Utah Reader* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1995), 474–91.

New women writers continue to emerge as well and are active in Utah's literary scene, ranging from naturalist Terry Tempest Williams and the multi-talented Linda Sillitoe to Salt Lake Community College professors Nicole

Stansbury, whose short stories have appeared in a variety of publications and poet Lisa Orme Bickmore, whose first book, *Haste: Poems* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books) appeared in 1994.

Public and private endowments in recent years have been a positive force in encouraging women writers and providing outlets for publication. The Utah State Poetry Society is perhaps most prominent among organizations supporting poetry. The society was organized in 1950; and since 1965, it has published one volume of poetry per year with money from the Nicholas G. Morgan-Paul Pehrson Fund. Many of Utah's best women poets have been published by the society. In fact, the prize-winning annual publication has regularly been awarded to women poets.<sup>39</sup> The society also collaborated with the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts and the League of Utah Writers in 1975 to produce the *Utah Literary Arts Magazine*, which unfortunately was funded for only one issue. Many leading women poets were included in the issue, which also featured critical essays delivered as honor lectures at Utah State University by Veneta Nielson and at the University of Utah by Clarice Short. *Silver Vain*, a poetry periodical published in Park City, and *Quarterly West*, published at the University of Utah, have provided outlets in recent years. Other publishing outlets included *Utah Holiday* magazine, now defunct, which featured regular columns and investigative reporting by women writers, and the journals *BYU Studies*, *Sunstone*, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, *Exponent II*, and *Salt Lake Magazine*. Programs funded by such agencies as the Utah Humanities Council and the Association of Mormon Letters are known for their receptivity to women's projects.

Limited mainly to a local reputation because her work focuses mostly on Mormon and Utah culture, Linda Sillitoe is a strong contender for the most talented young Utah woman writer. Like Phyllis McGinley, Sillitoe has forged a dual career as writer and parent. Twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for her work as a feature writer for the *Deseret News*, Sillitoe's investigative talents and writing style expanded as a writer for *Utah Holiday* magazine during the 1980s. Sillitoe's talent is diverse, ranging from investigative reporting through novels, stories, poetry, and history. Perhaps her best-known work is *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), a history of the notorious Mark Hofmann forgeries and murders which she coauthored with Allen D. Roberts.<sup>40</sup> Most recently, Sillitoe is the author of *A History of Salt Lake County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society/Salt Lake County Commission, 1996) one of the Centennial Series of county histories sponsored by the Utah State Historical Society.

Joyce Eliason is another multi-talented writer still in mid-career. Born and educated in Manti and later at the University of Utah, Eliason's early writings explore the no-man's-land of small-town kids who seek careers in a big city. No longer content with the slow pace and frequent backwardness of rural life, yet yearning for the innocence and simplicity she once knew there, Eliason

poured her frustration into her first novel, *Fresh Meat/Warm Weather*. “I can shut my eyes and see red cliffs and blue mountains and the green coming out and it is something I want to know again and knowing I can’t,” she laments, in one of the book’s unforgettable outbursts: “Goddamn those hills and little faraway Mormon Utah towns with names like Moroni, Lehi, Nephi. Goddamn those towns that protected me, formed me, buried me in one single motion. Goddamn the red of them and the blue of them . . . Goddamn it all because I can never get away from it. And I can never ever in any goddamn way get back to it.”<sup>41</sup>

At the University of Utah, Eliason turned to acting, which led to a career in screen writing and a long list of credits in adapting Western themes and works for both the big and small screen. “Child Bride of Short Creek,” for example, was a television film about the Arizona polygamy raids in the 1950s, and in 1994 she adapted Allan Gurganus’s *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989) for a television miniseries.<sup>42</sup>

Judith Freeman, a Weber County expatriate to Los Angeles, has made her mark as chronicler of the “off center” world of the Mormon working class in which she grew up. After a collection of short stories, *Family Attractions: Stories* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), Freeman wrote three novels: *The Chinchilla Farm: A Novel* (New York: Norton, 1989), *Set for Life* (New York: Norton, 1991), and *A Desert of Pure Feeling* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). Freeman’s books are risky, high-wire balancing acts in which she succeeds in making believable some quite bizarre people and improbable encounters, although one wonders what readers outside Utah make of her unexplained references to Mormon garments, sacrament meetings, and other mysteries. In 2002 Freeman won the Utah Book Award for *Red Water* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), a historical novel based on the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre.

Terry Tempest Williams once held the title “Naturalist in Residence” at the Utah Museum of Natural History at the University of Utah. It is an old-fashioned designation—naturalist—that calls to mind the scientific generalists who accompanied many great Western exploratory parties in the days before academic specialization. But the title has been revitalized through the careers of writers like Lorin Eisley, Lewis Thomas, Stephen Jay Gould, and Carl Sagan—sophisticated specialists in various scientific disciplines who are able to see the aesthetics and the metaphysics of their professions and to reveal them to the educated general reader. Whatever Williams’s scientific credentials, it is her attempt to see beyond mere data in a quest for spiritual meaning in the natural world that has earned her a large audience.<sup>43</sup>

*Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland*, which won the 1984 Southwest Book Award, established William’s reputation as a spiritual seeker through science, this time in anthropology. The book, she said in her preface, was “a journey into one culture, Navajo, and back out again to my own, Mormon,” focusing on such commonalities as their recent arrival in the

Southwest, their strong sense of place, their spirituality, and the tension of being caught between the modern and the traditional.<sup>44</sup> In her next book, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), the science is ornithology. The extraordinary 1983 rise in the level of the Great Salt Lake in 1983 threatened the population of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge at the same time her own family was threatened by her mother's ovarian cancer. The book is the parallel story of the unfolding of those two "unnatural" disasters in the natural world. Other books by Williams include *An Unspoken Hunger: Stories from the Field* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); *Leap* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000); *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001); and *The Open Space of Democracy* (Barrington, MA: Orion Society, 2004).

Other environment-oriented writers include Ann Zwinger, born in Muncie, Indiana, in 1925. She spent most of her youth along Indiana's White River. In 1946 Zwinger graduated from Wellesley College with a degree in art history and later completed a master's in art history at Indiana University in 1950. She married Herman Zwinger in 1952 and, after traveling widely, including in Utah, they settled in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she wrote her first naturalist book. Since then, Zwinger has authored over a dozen books and contributed to numerous anthologies on natural history. Zwinger is currently a professor at Colorado College. Her works include: *Run, River, Run* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975); *Downcanyon: A Naturalist Explores the Colorado River Through Grand Canyon* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), which won the prestigious Burroughs Award; *Wind in the Rock: The Canyonlands of Southeastern Utah* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986); and *The Near Sighted Naturalist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

Ellen Meloy is another noted naturalist, artist, and writer. Born in California in 1946, she studied art at Goucher College and environmental science at the University of Montana after working as an illustrator and gallery curator. Enchanted by Utah, she and her husband Mark lived in Bluff, Utah, where she wrote three books on the Colorado Plateau: *Raven's Exile: A Season on the Green River* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); *The Last Cheater's Waltz: Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001) and *The Anthropology of Turquoise: Meditations on Landscape, Art, and Spirit* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), which won a Utah Book Award and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction in 2003. Meloy died in 2004 at age fifty-eight after completing a new book manuscript, "Eating Stone."<sup>45</sup>

These writers, as previously indicated, by no means exhaust the list even of major women literary figures who are emerging in our day. It completely overlooks numerous women who specialize in children's and young adult writing. While some Utah writers are known only locally, many writers who were either born in Utah or influenced by their experiences in Utah, are known

and respected at a national level, receiving prestigious awards and recognition. Utah women are finding a new voice, a mature voice, and there seems to be increasing support, an increasing number of outlets, and a growing audience for what they have to say.

## NOTES

1. Cynthia James, "Literary Expression of 19th Century Utah Women," Mss A 2448 Utah State Historical Society, Utah History Research Center, Salt Lake City, offers a stimulating discussion of forces that helped shape women's writing.
2. Louisa Lula Greene Richards, "The Pioneer Women Editor of the Church," *Relief Society Magazine*, July 1925, 338–34; Leonard J. Arrington, "Louisa Lula Greene Richards: Woman Journalist of the Early West," *Improvement Era*, May 1969, 28–31; Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The *Woman's Exponent*: Forty-Two Years of Speaking for Women," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Summer 1976): 222–39.
3. Katherine Barrette Parsons, *History of Fifty Years: Ladies' Literary Club, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1877–1927* ([Salt Lake City]: Arrow Press, 1927), 37.
4. *Ibid.*, 68, 70. For the club's literary activities, see 70–78.
5. Linda Thatcher and John R. Sillito, "'Sisterhood and Sociability': The Utah Women's Press Club, 1891–1928," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 53 (Spring 1985): 144–56; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "A Bluestocking in Zion: The Literary Life of Emmeline B. Wells," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Spring 1983): 126–40.
6. Susa Young Gates, "Books and Authors," Gates Papers, Mss B 95, Utah State Historical Society.
7. Miriam B. Murphy, "Sarah Elizabeth Carmichael: Poetic Genius of Pioneer Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Winter 1975): 52–66; Lydia D. Alder, "Sarah E. Carmichael," *Woman's Exponent* 27 (January 15, 1899): 9.
8. Murphy, "Sarah Elizabeth Carmichael," 65–66.
9. Sarah E. Carmichael, *Poems* (San Francisco: Towne and Bacon, 1866), vi, 12.
10. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susanna Young Gates: Her Life and Literary Work" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1951), 61, 75.
11. Ralph Vary Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960).
12. Wallace Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1974), 11–14; Elizabeth Haglund, ed., *Remembering the University of Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), 114.
13. Blanche Cannon, *Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1948), 239.
14. *Ibid.*, 84.
15. Blanche Cannon, letter to Gary Topping, July 1984.
16. Richard Scowcroft, Review, *Utah Humanities Review* 2 (July 1848): 285–86.
17. Cannon, Letter to Topping.
18. Allene Jensen, "Utah Writers of the Twentieth Century: A Reference Tool" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1957), 150; Maryruth Bracy and Linda Lambert, "Maurine

- Whipple's Story of *The Giant Joshua*," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Autumn-Winter 1971): 55–62.
19. Sorensen won the Newbery Medal in 1957 for her children's book *Miracles on Maple Hill* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956).
  20. L. L. Lee and Sylvia B. Lee, *Virginia Sorensen*, Boise State University Western Writers Series, No. 31 (Boise: Boise State University Press, 1978). See also a special issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (Fall 1980); Mary Lythgoe Bradford, "Virginia Eggertsen Sorensen Waugh (1912–1991): Utah's First Lady of Letters," in *Worth Their Salt, Too: More Notable But Often Unnoted Women of Utah*, edited by Colleen Whitley (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 191–200.
  21. Virginia Sorensen, *A Little Lower Than the Angels* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 59.
  22. *Ibid.*, 16, 238.
  23. Virginia Sorensen, *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 162.
  24. Virginia Sorensen, *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), 256.
  25. Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, (1945; 2d ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), xi.
  26. Haglund, *Remembering the University of Utah*, 85–95; Shirley E. Stephenson, "Fawn McKay Brodie: An Oral History Interview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Summer 1981): 99–116. See also Gary Topping, *Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 282–330; Newell G. Bringhurst, "Fawn McKay Brodie: Dissident Historian and Quintessential Critic of Mormondom," in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, edited by Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 279–300.
  27. Stephenson, "Fawn McKay Brodie," 111. There is a large literature on Brodie and her books. Hugh Nibley led the Mormon attack. Four reviews of the book, including his critical essay, "No Ma'am, That's Not History," were collected by him into a pamphlet available at the Utah State Historical Society Utah History Research Center under the title "F. M. Brodie's Reliability as a Witness to the Character and Accomplishments of Joseph Smith." "No Man Knows My History" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7 (Winter 1972): 72–85 is well worth reading. The second edition of *No Man Knows My History* was reviewed by Marvin S. Hill, "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7 (Winter 1972): 72–85.
  28. Sterling M. McMurrin, "A New Climate of Liberation: A Tribute to Fawn McKay Brodie, 1915–1981," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Spring 1981): 75.
  29. For biographical information, see the Juanita Brooks Papers, Mss B 103, the Utah State Historical Society; unsigned entry on Brooks, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, edited by Howard R. Lamar (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978), 128–29; Levi S. Peterson, *Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988); Newell G. Bringhurst, "Juanita Brooks as a

- Mormon Dissenter,” *Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters*, edited by John R. Sillito and Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), chap. 9; Topping, *Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History*, chap. 3.
30. Juanita Brooks, “Just a Copyin’—Word fr Word,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 37 (Fall 1969): 375–95.
  31. See Miriam B. Murphy, “Helen Zeese Papanikolas: A Unique Voice in America,” in *Worth Their Salt: Notable But Often Unnoted Women of Utah*, edited by Colleen Whitley (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), chap. 18; *Journal of Hellenic Diaspora* 29, no. 2 (2003), a special issue of “Homage to Helen Papanikolas.”
  32. Articles included in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* include: “The Greeks of Carbon County,” 22 (April 1954): 143–64; “Life and Labor among the Immigrants of Bingham Canyon,” 33 (Fall 1965): 289–315; and “Toil and Rage in a New Land: The Greek Immigrants in Utah,” 38 (Spring 1970): 97–206 (actually a book-length publication occupying an entire issue of the *Quarterly*). The index to the *Quarterly* lists other Papanikolas articles.
  33. Kate Thomas Papers, Mss B 88, Utah State Historical Society.
  34. “May Swenson, Poet and Former Utahn, Dies at 76,” *Deseret News*, December 6, 1989, B-4. For biographical information, see R. R. Knudson and Suzanne Bigelow, with a foreword by Richard Wilbur, *May Swenson: A Poet’s Life in Photos* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996).
  35. Gail Porter Mandell, *Madeleva: One Woman’s Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994); John Sillito, “A Transplanted Utah Beehive: Sister Madeleva Wolff,” in *The Word from Weber*, edited by Bob Sawatzki (Ogden, Utah: Friends of the Weber County Library, 1996), 185–200.
  36. [Linda Thatcher], “Phyllis McGinley,” *Beehive History* 17 (1991): 21–22; “The Telltale Hearth,” *Time*, June 18, 1965, 74–77; Linda Welshimer Wagner, *Phyllis McGinley* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971).
  37. Phyllis McGinley, *Sixpence in Her Shoe* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 1–2.
  38. Cynthia Lampropoulos, “Emma Lou Warner Thayne (1924– ): On the Side of Life,” *Worth Their Salt, Too: More Notable But Often Unnoted Women of Utah*, edited by Colleen Whitley (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), chap. 16.
  39. Helen Mar Cook, in a letter to Topping July 16, 1984, gives information on the Utah State Poetry Society and its prizes. The volumes published by the society since 1965 include the following authored by women: Vesta P. Crawford, *Short Grass Woman* (1965); Lael W. Hill, *A Legacy of Years* (1966); Berta W. Christensen, *Walk the Proud Morning* (1967); Betty W. Madsen, *The Amaranth* (1968); Alice Morrey Bailey, *Eden from an Applesed* (1971); Maxine R. Jennings, *A Lamp to Shine* (1972); Geraldine R. Pratt, *Bell on the Wind* (1973); Helen Mar Cook, *Shape of Flight* (1975); Caroline Eyring Miner, *Lasso the Sunrise* (1976); Pearle M. Olsen, *Frame the Laced Moments* (1978); Laverde Morgan Clayson, *Furrows of Renewal* (1980); LaVon B. Carroll, *The Shrouded Carousel* (1982); Bonnie Howe Behunin, *Wake the Unicorn* (1983); Joyce Ellen Davis, *In Willy’s House* (1984); Patricia S. Grimm, *Timepiece* (1985); Dorothy Logan, *Child in a Sculptured Bowl* (1986); Kathryn Clement, *Riddlestone* (1987);

- Maryan Paxton, *Downwind Toward Night* (1989); Elaine Christensen, *At the Edges* (1990); Margaret Pettis, *Chokecherry Rain* (1993); Muriel Heal Bywater, *Stretching toward Wild Swans* (1994); Elaine L. Ipson, *Where Ghosts Are Garrisoned* (1995); Nancy Baird, *The Shell in Silk* (1996); Marilyn Darley Williams, *The Red Rooster Café* (1997); Marilyn Bushman-Carlton, *Cheat Grass* (1999); Kolette Montague, *Easing into Light* (2000); Rita Bowles, *God in Assorted Boxes* (2001); Evelyn Hughes, *Furnace of Affliction* (2002); Judy Johns, *If I Could Speak in Silk* (2003); Maureen Haltiner, *A Season and a Time* (2004).
40. Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), with an essay by forensic investigator George J. Throckmorton; she explores the same theme from a fictional perspective in *Secrets Keep: A Novel* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995). She has also published a novel, *Sideways to the Sun* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), a collection of short stories, *Windows on the Sea and Other Stories* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), and poems, *Crazy for Living: Poems* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).
  41. Joyce Eliason, *Fresh Meat/Warm Weather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 3–4. Her second novel is *Laid Out* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
  42. Harold Schindler, “New Take on the Old West: Former Utah’s Screenplay Tells the Story of Blacks. Writer Puts New Spin on Old West,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 24, 1995, D-1.
  43. Katherine R. Chandler and Melissa A. Goldthwaithe, eds., *Surveying the Literary Landscapes of Terry Tempest Williams: New Critical Essays* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003).
  44. Terry Tempest Williams, *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1984), 2.
  45. “Author Ellen Meloy Dies at Her Bluff Home,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 9, 2004; Dennis Lythgoe, “Mourning the Loss of Naturalist Writer,” *Deseret News*, November 14, 2004; “Ellen Meloy,” in *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women’s Nature Writing*, edited by Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2002), 322–32.