

The Long Honeymoon: Jan Shipps among the Mormons

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THIS ESSAY HAD ITS ORIGINS in a projected review of Jan Shipps's *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). I have expanded it into an assessment of Professor Shipps's *oeuvre* as a scholar of Mormonism, set within the context of the historiography of Mormonism and American culture.

Not long ago I had occasion to drive Interstate 15 down the spine of Utah from Salt Lake City to St. George, a figurative stone's throw from both Arizona and Nevada, then drove back by way of the eastern side of the range, winding my way north along U.S. Highway 89, from Mount Carmel Junction east of Zion National Park, following the Sevier River to the town of Richfield. After traversing a sagebrush-covered ridge, my car crossed into Sanpete County, where the Manti Temple, gleaming white in oolite limestone hewn from the nearby mountains, reminds travelers that this is Mormon country. Of course, a few days earlier, when my plane had

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swooped down across the Wasatch Range into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, I was entering Mormon country as well, flying almost literally above the route that the Mormon pioneers had followed down Emigration Canyon in July 1847, where now a larger-than-life statue of Brigham Young reminds modern visitors that “This Is the Place.” As every Mormon knows, these are the very words that the founder of the Great Basin Kingdom (the felicitous title of an iconic book by the late dean of Mormon historians, Leonard J. Arrington) reportedly used to indicate to his weary followers that they had finally arrived at the place “that God for us prepared”—in the words of Mormondom’s unofficial national anthem, “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Yet within the space of my thirty-hour trip I learned that there is a subtle yet palpable difference between the world of Salt Lake City and I-15, located on the western slope of the Wasatch Mountains, and Sevier Valley, Manti, and U.S. 89, hugging the eastern slope of the range. This difference is not fully explained by the obvious difference between rural and urban Utah.¹ Many visitors to the Salt Lake City Olympics had expected to encounter an exotic species of *homo mormonis*, only to find that Mormons, in the words of historian of religions Martin Marty, “are just folks down the block.”² Although Marty might have used the same words to describe most of the people of Manti and those living along the eastern slope of the Wasatch Range, the observant traveler cannot help but notice that the world of U.S. 89 is not quite the same as that of I-15, harking as it does back to an age when all of Utah (as well as parts of present-day Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, and Nevada—even California) was the kingdom of God, gathering the Latter-day Saints like wheat from tares from the four corners of the earth to a western “city upon a hill” in the everlasting mountains. In this “imagined community,” Mormons achieved an identity that influential commentators have likened to ethnicity, fostered by a religio-political community embodied in the short-lived State

1. Those familiar with the geography of Utah should understand that I use the I-15/U.S. 89 dichotomy symbolically. A number of Mormon towns off the I-15 exits, such as Beaver or Scipio, fit the U.S. 89 pattern, while a U.S. 89 city like Richfield fits better into the I-15 conceit.

2. Quoted in Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), x.

of Deseret—named after the Book of Mormon word for honey bee signifying industry.³

The modern world encroached on the Mormon kingdom almost immediately with the gold rush '49ers, transforming Deseret into Utah Territory and later the State of Utah. Still, many Mormons continued to cling to the ideal of Deseret. In his presidential address to the Mormon History Association in 1976, Charles S. Peterson asserted that the Mormon village pattern of settlement, representing isolation from the larger world, allowed, even encouraged, the creation and maintenance of a Mormon identity resistant to the forces of modernization that overtook ecclesiastical centers such as Salt Lake City. Thus, the Mormon village culture at the periphery—in Cache Valley, in southern Utah, in northern Arizona, and even in southern Alberta—became the quintessential Mormon heartland, characterized by a social type whom University of Utah historian Dean L. May has called the “Deseret Mormon.” It was at the periphery of Mormondom that the Deseret ideal prevailed the longest, preserving old Mormon ways. Vestiges of this culture can still be encountered in a string of old Mormon towns along U.S. 89, even if most residents, with the exception of a tenacious minority, have accepted the church’s ban on polygamous marriages.⁴

This world is part of what historical geographer Richard V. Francaviglia has described as *The Mormon Landscape: Existence, Creation,*

3. Shippo underplays the controversy about whether Mormons are, in fact, an ethnic group, taking her cue largely from Dean L. May, “Mormons,” *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, edited by Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 720–31. See Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 5–11, 51–55, 151, 197; his “Mormons as Ethnics: Variable Historical and International Implications for an Appealing Concept,” and Keith Parry, “Mormons as Ethnics: A Canadian Perspective,” in *The Mormon Presence in Canada*, edited by Brigham Y. Card et al. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 329–65; Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to Rethink Culture and Ethnicity in American History,” in *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 235–55, 368–71. For the broader context, see the influential work by Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2d. ed. (New York: Versor, 1991).

4. Charles S. Peterson, “A Mormon Town: One Man’s West,” *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 3–12; Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land and So-*

and *Perception of a Unique Image in the American West* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), a blend of religious values and material culture that finds expression in brick, stone, or adobe houses situated on large lots watered by irrigation ditches, adjoined by weathered outbuildings, the whole protected by a "Mormon fence," shaded by Lombardy poplars reaching into a deep blue heaven—a Mormon sky that rarely turns gray (captured in some magnificent landscapes of Depression painter Maynard Dixon), so that the desert was made to "blossom like a rose" only through the defiant labor of pioneers diverting reluctant mountain streams onto a parched land. Such towns could be found along the Mormon Corridor from St. Charles on Bear Lake in Idaho to St. George in southern Utah and on into the settlements along the Little Colorado in eastern Arizona. More than trees, houses, and barns, however, this landscape also represented a psychological and spiritual frame of mind. Edward Geary has evoked this world in his elegiac "Goodbye to Poplarhaven."⁵ Some future historian may describe it as "the world we have lost."⁶

As it happened, it was into this fading world that Jan Shipp found herself transported in 1960 when her husband, Tony, accepted a position at Utah State University in Logan. Cache Valley had been part of the very heartland of Deseret Mormonism—in fact, one of May's prime examples. It is therefore wonderfully appropriate that a painting of the valley by artist H. Reuben Reynolds evoking the Mormon landscape adorns the cover of Shipp's volume. A young mother, she made the best of her situation

ciety in the American West, 1850–1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 185–243. The concept, however, is not uncontroversial. Mormon anthropologist John L. Sorenson expands the term "Deseret Mormon" to include virtually all Mormons in the intermountain West: "Toward a Characterization of the Mormon Personality," in his *Mormon Culture: Four Decades of Essays on Mormon Society and Personality*, edited by Matthew R. Sorenson (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 172–82.

5. Edward L. Geary, *Goodbye to Poplarhaven: Recollections of a Utah Boyhood* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985); and his "For the Strength of the Hills: Imagining Mormon Country," in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, edited by Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, 1983), 71–94.

6. I borrow the term from Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1965).

and enrolled in the history program at USU to complete her baccalaureate. To her bemusement she discovered that, although Utah State was nominally a state university, her history courses all had a Mormon subtext. The Utah War figured prominently in a study of the causes of the Civil War—as indeed it should, though they don't teach you this at Harvard or at Stanford. The Reformation course, taught by a Presbyterian professor, involved a not-so-subtle dialogue with Mormonism, not always to the latter's advantage. Though Shipps and her family moved to the University of Colorado after only nine months in Logan, the culture shock so intrigued and fascinated her that she was motivated to do a thesis on the Mormons for her master's degree at the University of Colorado. This thesis was stretched into a Ph.D. dissertation, also at Colorado, on "The Mormons in Politics: The First Hundred Years" (1965) and launched her on a lifetime career in Mormon studies—as a "sojourner in the promised land."

Shipps arrived at a crucial juncture in Mormon history, witnessing first-hand the transformation of a regional religion with a membership of less than 1.5 million, which, she asserts in *Sojourner*, shared an ethnic heritage "as distinctive and important as that of Chicanos, Asians, and Native American groups" into a world religion that in 2004 numbered nearly 12 million members, most of whom had never visited the promised land and whose ethnic identity, if they had one, was separate from their religion.⁷ As Shipps observed, "Not until 1960, and then for the first time since the early decades of Mormonism's existence, were more people added to the LDS Church membership rolls through conversion than as a consequence of natural increase. This persisted, initiating a new state of affairs for the church in which exponential growth fueled by conversion would become the normal condition. Although it was not obvious at the time, it so happened that my arrival in Zion in 1960 occurred during a pivotal year" (368). Until then, for more than a century, the majority of Latter-day Saints had been "birthright" Mormons, born "under the covenant." This transformation "from peoplehood to church membership," or from "insularity to universality," to use Shipp's words, is a major thread holding this collection together (6).

For Shipps to grasp the full significance of this metamorphosis, she had to get a handle on the kind of Mormonism she had encountered in

7. Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 35. From this point, I cite this work parenthetically in the text.

Cache Valley. The Colorado Ph.D., it turned out, was a bit of a detour, though it helped establish her credentials as a “Mormon” historian, giving her entry to archives and connections to practitioners in the field. But as she tried to work her way through the maze that she had unwittingly entered, she realized that the more she learned the more complicated Mormonism became. Her work on Mormon politics was simply too limited for understanding Mormonism as a religion. She saw the same limitations in sociological, psychological, or cultural approaches to Mormonism, becoming persuaded that the discipline of religious studies provided the most fruitful approach to a more comprehensive understanding of the strange world she had entered. She reported her discoveries in her first and foundational work, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

As an “inside-outsider” or “participant observer,” she assumed a nonjudgmental attitude, attempting to describe Mormonism from the inside, the way believers themselves experienced their religion and their history, although she came to Mormonism as an outsider. Taking her cue from Fawn M. Brodie’s insight that Mormonism “was no mere dissenting sect [but] . . . a real religious creation, one intended to be to Christianity as Christianity was to Judaism: that is, a reform and a consummation,”⁸ Shippo construed the Mormon experience as a biblical analogue, narrated through the history and the beliefs of its followers who, like the Children of Israel, had become a people by separating themselves from the world through an arduous journey to the Promised Land. Living in “sacred time” in their mountain kingdom, the Saints, under the onslaught of the modern world, had to sacrifice the kingdom (and plural marriage) and had to learn to live in “ordinary time”—transcending in her explanation a process sociologists have generally described as a transition from sect to church, or from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. In Shippo’s view, this adjustment was the necessary price to pay for transforming Mormonism into a “new religious tradition”—neither an esoteric cult nor a modern denomination.

Shippo believes that she has had at least a glimpse of the pioneers’ entry into sacred time through her own journey to Cache Valley with her

8. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (1945; 2d ed. rev. and enl., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), viii.

family in a Rambler station wagon along much of the route taken by the Mormon pioneers—which had a dramatic structure of its own as they entered the valley through the winding and precipitous gorge of Logan Canyon. (Those who believe in the interconnectedness of the cosmos might also point out that the Rambler was manufactured by a car company at that time presided over by prominent Mormon George Romney.) Yet aware of the subjectivity of such stories, she makes it clear that she is merely taking advantage of personal experience as a kind of heuristic device (not a term she herself uses) to gain entry into a larger historical landscape as well as creating connective tissue to tie together writings that would otherwise have stood alone, if not disjointed, thus making the whole larger than the sum of the parts. However, this device does not mean that these essays and articles are cut from the same bolt of cloth, written as they were for different occasions, for different reasons, and addressed to different audiences. Thus to insist on too much consistency could be regarded as “foolish” (with a nod to Emerson). Occasional contradictions and inconsistencies may also reflect the realities of a cultural transformation at its most intense, even while Shippo was writing many of these observations and analyses—with Mormonism as an emerging world religion and a slowly fading “tribal culture” (369) in as uneasy a coexistence as the worlds of I-15 and U.S. 89.

Part memoir, part history, and part methodology, the articles and essays are divided into five parts, bracketed by a “Prologue” and an “Epilogue” that effectively contextualize the volume. An introductory essay includes an explanation of why historians of the American West circumnavigate Mormon country in their accounts—“the hole in the doughnut,” as Shippo calls it. Mormons, being “different,” are difficult to fit into traditional or modern historical frameworks. Religion compounds the problem for historians who “tend to be a secular lot.”⁹ Of course, it may simply be the case that most of these historians would agree with Bernard DeVoto that those who write about Mormonism overrate its importance:

9. *Ibid.*, 35. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil*, 239, also addresses this issue, arguing that Frederick Jackson Turner bears much responsibility for this neglect, because the history of Mormonism did not support his argument. She further notes that, while writing *The Legacy of Conquest*, she saw “considerable common ground in the cause of Mormon history and Western American History” (239).

"It is at best a minor thing in America as a whole, and at best an aberration of the principal energies involved in it."¹⁰ While not going this far, I am on record as having argued that Mormonism made a contribution to the debate over the meaning of America in the nineteenth century but that the movement has declined in importance as it blends more and more into the modern mainstream—its significance being inversely related to its numbers.¹¹ This argument is, naturally, heavily weighted toward the relationship between Mormonism and American culture. Shipps, however, disagrees, attempting to disengage Mormonism from American culture and making the central theme of her argument the story of an emerging world religion representing "a new religious tradition."¹²

In what is the most ambitious academic research project in this collection, Shipps reports on this change as it was perceived by the outside world through a sample study of more than 100 popular journal and magazine articles from 1860 to 1960, announcing the results in the title: "From Satyr to Saint." A follow-up article picks up the story in 1960. The internal transformation led to a flowering of historical research, both by Mormon and non-Mormon scholars (albeit not of the "western" kind), which she discusses and analyzes from an impressive fund of knowledge, even if, as will be seen, I sometimes disagree—particularly on interpretations of theological and societal change that comprise a substantial part of the remainder of her *Sojourner*. For example, I am not convinced that Mormons have internalized a "Christian" identity to the degree that Shipps asserts. That is not to say that she doesn't have astute eyes and ears. Clearly, this is a remarkable document chronicling religious, social, and cultural change in modern times—regardless of who is right about the importance of Mormonism in the larger scheme of things.

When Shipps arrived in Logan, it was of course as an outsider; and an important part of her story is the process by which she became an "inside-outsider." Though she doesn't say so explicitly, it is clear that in the

10. Bernard DeVoto, Letter, December 28, 1945, in Wallace Stegner, ed., *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), xx.

11. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, xv-xvi.

12. In a different key, Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), likewise argues for the enormous importance of Mormonism in what he calls the "Post-Christian" era.

world of Cache Valley Mormons she always remained an outsider. The “insider” status was achieved in the Mormon world of I-15, where a modern academic woman could communicate to modernizing Mormons in the intellectual milieu of the contemporary academy and in the higher echelons of a sophisticated Church bureaucracy—and in some instances even the hierarchy.

Shipps made her entry into Mormon scholarship, not only at a critical juncture of demographic change, but also at a transitional time in Mormon intellectual life, one that witnessed the founding of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (an independent quarterly, 1966); the Mormon History Association in December 1965 (Shipps is a proud charter member); the *Journal of Mormon History* (1974); *Exponent II* (concerned with women’s issues, 1974); *Sunstone* (an independent monthly, 1975); the John Whitmer Historical Association (founded by members of the Reorganized Church, now Community of Christ, in 1977), and the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* (1981). These events coincided with the flowering of what has been called the New Mormon History—an elastic term that has been defined differently by different historians, though in its most generic meaning it refers to those works, largely published after World War II, that Shipps sees as departing from the “them” and “us” mentalities of the Mormon-Gentile dichotomy. A representative work of the “us” mentality is *Essentials in Church History* by Joseph Fielding Smith, who was a grandson of Hyrum Smith, a Mormon apostle, the Church Historian, and later Church President. This work, first published in 1922, is still in print.

A major representative of the “them” mentality was Fawn M. Brodie’s magisterial and controversial biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, which attempted to explain the Mormon prophet as a product of his time and place. This approach was in keeping with the secular assumptions dominant in the American academic culture of which she was a part. Written in a brilliant prose style still unsurpassed (though Shipps, in her own way, is just as impressive), the work is still in print and regarded as balanced, even positive in academic circles, although it is heavily criticized by most Mormon historians (including Shipps herself) for being reductionist, unsympathetic, and deficient in its sources. Brodie was particularly hard on the historical claims of the Book of Mormon and on the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Unlike Smith’s revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants, which must be accepted on

faith (like such sacred texts as the Qur'an, Mary Baker Eddy, or Ellen G. White), she argued that the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham invited empirical verification: the first because it is deemed to be the sacred but actual history of pre-Columbian America, the second because it claims to be a translation of real documents—Egyptian papyri—in possession of the Mormon Church. Brodie insisted that because historians, linguists, archaeologists, and ethnologists have so far been unable to establish a connection between the story of the Book of Mormon and ancient American history and culture, the book's claims are open to serious doubt. So are the claims of the Book of Abraham. Egyptologists who were invited to examine the papyri thus far have been unable to make a meaningful connection between these documents and the Abrahamic story, declaring the papyri to be one of numerous copies of the common "Book of Breathings."¹³

However, by Shipp's own definition, Brodie does not fit comfortably into the New Mormon History mold because, just like Joseph Fielding Smith, she insists on pursuing the "Truth" question, which in the world of religious studies is bracketed as a matter of course. Shipp does this in her own work on Joseph Smith, i.e., he is a genuine prophet because he behaves the way prophets are supposed to—"as one who speaks for God" (331). Moreover, if believers are not bothered by the kinds of discrepancies that critics like Brodie find troublesome, then why should Shipp, to whom truth is in the eye of the believers? Here she is in very good company—the movers and shakers of the *Zeitgeist*. For example, I am reminded of attempts to rehabilitate the tarnished reputation of Sigmund Freud by circumnavigating his scientific claims through an hermeneutical approach in a close reading of his message—though in the case of Freud, the onus is on his critics. He has heavy guns like Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas on his side, while in the case of Joseph Smith it is the heavy guns who are trained on him.¹⁴

There is a general consensus that Leonard Arrington was the founding father of the New Mormon History. His *Great Basin Kingdom: An Eco-*

13. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 421–24; "The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: Translations and Interpretations," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 67–105; Klaus Baer, "The Breathing Permit of Hor," *Dialogue* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1968): 109–34.

14. For attacks on Freud, see especially Frederick Crews, *Unauthorized*

conomic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprinted Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966; and Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press and the Tanner Trust Fund, 1993),¹⁵ set the standard and the tone for the scholarly studies pouring out over the rest of the century, mostly by believing Latter-day Saints, but including also notable works by sympathetic outsiders.¹⁶ Unlike faith-promoting histories like Joseph Fielding Smith's, which saw the hand of God in human affairs, these studies had naturalistic explanations for the course of events, although believers could also choose to see divine guidance behind the historical process. Arrington himself—as well as most Latter-day Saint historians emulating his example—professed to believe in the fundamental principles of Mormonism, arguing that the truth could stand on its own feet, requiring neither special pleading nor the omission of crucial if uncomfortable historical facts. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this approach is Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950; 2d. ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), a scrupulously honest and searching account of a tragic event during the Utah War (1857), when an entire wagon train of emigrants from Arkansas was murdered in southern Utah by fanatical

Freud: *Doubters Confront a Legend* (New York: Viking, 1998); and his *The Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute* (New York: New York Review of Books, (1995); on Ricoeur and Habermas, see Peter Loewenberg, "Psychoanalysis as a Hermeneutic Science," in *Whose Freud? The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), esp. 97.

15. The term "New Mormon History" was coined by Moses Rischin, "The New Mormon History," *American West* 6 (March 1969), 49. For a superb overview and analysis, see Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 61–112.

16. See Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Mario S. DePillis, "The Quest for Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue* 1 (Spring 1966): 66–68 and "The Social Sources of Mormonism," *Church History* 38 (March 1968): 50–79; Mark P. Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989).

Mormons in collaboration with local Indians.¹⁷ Earlier histories such as Joseph Fielding Smith's had emphasized only the persecutions and sufferings of the *Saints*.

Not surprisingly, such honesty was and continues to be upsetting to some conservative Church leaders and followers, who believe that their history should be presented only in the best light, with the hand of faith always guiding the pen of the historian.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the general tenor of the *New Mormon History* was never to question the essential foundations of the Church. Brooks herself remained active in her religion her entire life. So did Arrington and his associates, as well as the many students and scholars who saw him as a role model. Thus, in spite of the criticism engendered by the *New Mormon History*, it never strayed far from orthodoxy. Still some scholars who were seen as pushing too far beyond these boundaries were excommunicated, the first being Brodie herself. A more recent case (1993) is that of D. Michael Quinn, one of the most prolific authors of the *New Mormon History*.

Of course this means that, if the *New Mormon* historians want to remain in the Church, certain subjects are taboo—too close a look at the historical context of antebellum America, the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon, or the suggestion that the Book of Abraham may be a product of the inventive mind of Joseph Smith. As Ronald W. Walker, Da-

17. D. Michael Quinn, "Editor's Introduction," in *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), vii, argues that the *New Mormon History* began with the publication of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*. The massacre has once again become a focus of scholarly debate, mostly recently in Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). Bagley describes his work as "not a revision but an extension of Brooks's labors" (xiv). Brooks's "Achilles' heel," he argues, is her reliance on the "testimony of murderers" and a too-sympathetic treatment of John D. Lee (357). However, he concedes that, at the end of the day, Brooks did conclude that "white men, not Indians, were chiefly responsible" (363). A sympathetic critic, Gary Topping, *Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 202, asked, "How can one accept the soundness of everything that led up to the massacre, then condemn the act itself?"

18. A classic authoritative statement is Apostle Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21 (Summer 1981), 264-68. A more sophisticated approach, respecting both the mantle and the intellect, is Richard L. Bushman, "Faithful History," *Dialogue* 4 (Winter 1969): 18.

vid J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, authors of an impressive new historiographical synthesis and interpretation—*Mormon History*—suggested, the new history was often “introspective and self-confining,” much of it motivated by an impulse of self-discovery of greater importance to the Mormon community than to the outside world (94). Even more severe in his criticism was Charles S. Peterson, who argued that the New Mormon History had fallen between two stools, on the one hand alienating conservative members of the hierarchy and their followers, on the other failing to engage mainstream Americanists. A case in point is biographical studies of secondary figures, which, though they filled out the story of the Latter-day Saints, offended believers by paying too much attention to the human side of their ancestors, while historians in the “real world” couldn’t have cared less. Perhaps the irony of the enterprise is best illustrated in Leonard Arrington’s biography of Brigham Young which, by slighting his spiritual side (according to Shipps), offended believers, while it failed to tackle the hard questions that would have been unavoidable in a biography of Joseph Smith.¹⁹

Although the New Mormon History is an umbrella for diverse ways of looking at the Mormon past, it appears that, at its center, have been works that approached the subject from two perspectives (*vis-à-vis* Shipps’s position)—that of the inside-insider, and that of the outside-insider, with Leonard Arrington as the representative, commanding figure exemplifying both approaches. It is in *Great Basin Kingdom* that he comes perhaps closest to succeeding as an outside-insider. In *The Mormon Experience* (1979; 2d ed., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), written with Davis Bitton, the constraints of membership in the higher Church bureaucracy were all too apparent. Much of his other work is clearly that of an inside-insider. So was most of the work produced under his direction as Church Historian and later as director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Insti-

19. Charles S. Peterson, “Beyond the Problems of Exceptionalist History,” in *Great Basin Kingdom Revisited*, edited by Thomas G. Alexander (Logan: Utah State University, 1991), 143–48; Leonard G. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Jan Shipps, review of *Brigham Young: American Moses*, in *Journal of American History* 73, no. 1 (June 1986): 190–91; and her “Brigham Young and His Times: A Continuing Force in Mormonism,” *Journal of the West* 23 (January 1984), 48–54; reprinted in *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 244–57. For a perceptive discussion of Mormon biography, see Walker, Whittaker, and Allen, *Mormon History*, 113–52.

tute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University. It was professional, scholarly, well-researched, well-written explorations of the vast geography of Mormon territory. By pointing out that some of this work involved putting new wine into old bottles (or the other way around?), I am merely reporting the obvious, though perhaps a better way to describe it is to say that it was unaffected by linguistic turns and various postmodern agendas. To fit it into the conceit of my essay, this history straddles the worlds of I-15 and U.S. 89. I am inclined to call it the Arrington paradigm.

Yet the work of the perhaps most important scholar emerging out of this tradition does not fit comfortably under this umbrella. Thomas G. Alexander has made a serious attempt to confront some of the theoretical and methodological problems essentially ignored by the Arrington paradigm which, in spite of its professionalism, did not succeed entirely in bridging the credibility gap between "faithful history" and the critical standards of the modern academy. Of course this is no problem for those scholars, such as the celebrated apologist Hugh Nibley, who profess contempt for the opinion of the world; but it was for Arrington, who cared deeply about the respect of Harvard and Stanford and the rest. (Here we touch on one reason for Shipp's success among the Mormons, who have always craved the attention and respect of the outside world). Alexander, though having a strong institutional identification, insisted on bracketing the truth question, borrowing the term "behaviorism" from historian Robert Berkhofer, which allowed for an honest and unflinching description of religiously motivated actions without getting involved in evaluating them by the standards of the secular world.²⁰ This approach stood Alexander in good stead in his study of Mormon apostle and Church president Wilford Woodruff, a pivotal figure in the abolition of polygamy, as well as in broader studies such as *Mormonism in Transition*.²¹

However, as Mormon anthropologist John Sorenson has cautioned, even the most careful and "objective" scholars working within an institu-

20. Thomas G. Alexander, "Historiography and the New Mormon History: A Historian's Perspective," *Dialogue* 19 (Fall 1968): 25-49; Robert Berkhofer, *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

21. Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, A Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991);

tion tend to be perceived as “insiders.”²² Outsiders like Shipps benefit from being perceived as more “objective” by the non-Mormon scholarly community—an advantage that has been a valuable asset to her work. In a paradoxical way, this perception allows her to be more sympathetic to the Mormon story than insiders, without the danger of being tainted as an apologist. To be fair, Shipps has brought an original point of view to the enormous sea change that engulfed Mormonism and its history in the second half of the twentieth century. Realizing that Mormonism as a religion and a culture is incredibly complicated, she has also made great efforts to look at Mormonism as if she were an insider, avoiding the mistakes of so many outside observers who have often been like the blind men of Hindustan attempting to describe the elephant. Although, to change the metaphor, Shipps did not exactly get into the “skin of the lion,” she has been remarkable in her ability to absorb the intricate details of Mormonism, enabling her work to achieve credibility both among insiders and outsiders.

It is perhaps too much to call the Arrington paradigm, in the language of the distinguished historian of science Thomas Kuhn,²³ “normal” history, and Shipps’s history “revolutionary.” Yet in a less technical sense, Shipps’s interpretation of Mormonism can be called a new paradigm, though her new understanding is based less on history than on a variant of religious studies that relies on analogies and comparisons, such as between early Christianity and Judaism. In the case of Joseph Smith, this approach resulted in a modern “reinvention” of ancient beliefs and practices, leading to a “new religious tradition”—a notion that to those favoring interpretations derived from traditional, historical scholarship may well appear as a contradiction in terms. I have called it “meta-history.”²⁴ Critics, however, are very much in the minority, hardly sufficient to challenge by their numbers the paradigmatic status of the new religious tradition interpretation, which by now has become entrenched as the equivalent of “normal science,” both within the Mor-

and his *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

22. Sorenson, *Mormon Culture*, 5.

23. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

24. I made this comment in a review I no longer have.

mon intellectual community and among sympathetic outsiders. Skeptics of the new interpretation include both orthodox and liberal Mormons who insist that the evasion of the “truth” question places the historical enterprise in as much doubt as an open attack by unbelievers, and who see Shipp’s assertion that questions like the historicity of the Book of Mormon are not on her “agenda of things to find out” as an evasion.²⁵ (I call it the “religious studies escape hatch.”)

In recent years individual historians, all motivated by respect for the beliefs of faithful Mormons, yet conscious of the potential credibility gap between these and the critical standards of the modern academy, have adopted various strategies that can be lumped together under a generic definition of postmodernism—though it is not a term Shipp uses to describe her methodology. It is instructive, however, that Richard Bushman, who has expressed a healthy disrespect for the tribal customs of the academy, has opted for a postmodern approach in his own work-in-progress, “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century.”²⁶ Perhaps the smartest among the conservative “believers,” Bushman is acutely aware of the problems he is up against. Superficially, his approach to Smith is not unlike that of Shipp, though kindred spirits they are not, coming as they do from opposite ends of the believer spectrum. Bushman, of course, cares deeply about those hard questions raised by Brodie, although he comes to different conclusions than she because of his profound religious commitment, which forces him to insist that the Book of Mormon is a “revelation,” thus exempting it from challenges as a historical document.

Unlike Shipp and Bushman, literary scholar Terryl Givens makes a serious—and courageous—attempt at dealing with the historicity question. Realizing that a refusal to parse the text/revelation conundrum could be perceived as an evasion, he does his best to answer Brodie, John Brooke, and others who acknowledge the reality of the text—though as a nineteenth-century artifact.²⁷ Yet if Givens’s attempt to deal with the Book of Mormon as an ancient text—however sophisticated—is weighed down

25. Shipp, “An ‘Inside-Outsider’ in Zion,” *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 143.

26. Richard L. Bushman, “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century,” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 3 (2001): 155–71.

27. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

by evidence considered highly controversial in the world of scholarship, it is more appealing than the postmodern evasions.

Getting back to Shippo, the Book of Mormon debate impinges on a hot-button issue she *does* address—the question of whether Mormons are Christian. Befitting their status as an aspiring world religion, Mormons have become highly sensitive on that point. Their emphatic insistence that they are, indeed, Christian, is in part a reaction to persistent attacks by conservative evangelicals that they are not—given Mormons’ anthropomorphizing of the divine, their materialistic monism, their belief in a plurality of gods,²⁸ in the premortal existence of spirits, in the doctrine of eternal progression, and in the plurality of wives in the after-life (even if no longer in this life)—to name only those beliefs causing the most offense. Shippo takes issue with such a list of particulars, ending a rather complicated, on the whole sophisticated, and somewhat convoluted argument by agreeing with contemporary Mormons that they have a right to their own definition of what it means to be Christian.

Unlike the question of the historicity of the Book of Mormon, this one cannot be reduced to a true/false exam. I myself tend to be more open to arguments to the negative, such as those of Father Richard John Neuhaus, editor-in-chief of the religious intellectual journal *First Things*, who can hardly be accused of sharing the prejudiced opinions of religious red-necks. Neuhaus is on solid ground in his argument that it was the Mormons themselves who initiated the distance between their religion and the Christian world. This assessment agrees with the historical importance of a central text in the Mormon canon, Smith’s First Vision, which contains an explicit rejection of the Christianity of its day—that the churches of his time “were all wrong; . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his [God’s] sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (JS—H 2:19). The First Vision has evolved as a central part of the modern canon and can be construed as a firm, contemporary rejection of mainline Christianity. At the same time, like Shippo, Neuhaus would not withdraw Christian fellowship

28. A recent attack on Mormonism as non-Christian is Richard Abanes, *One Nation under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002).

from any who seek it. But unlike Shipps, he makes a clear distinction between the two issues.²⁹

Terryl Givens also weighed in on this controversy in an earlier book. In a brilliant discussion of the construction of heresy, he observed, "To insist that Mormons are Christian, but in a sense peculiar to them, is to appropriate the term to their private meaning and to impudently assert that heresy is orthodoxy, and orthodoxy heresy. . . . Mormonism sees itself as redefining in a radical way the essence of Christianity, and both Mormonism and its critics deny the possibility of accommodation because of the way Mormonism reconceptualizes religion itself."³⁰ Richard Abanes, one of the most knowledgeable among the legion of anti-Mormon Christian polemicists avers that the fundamental theology of Mormonism has not changed and that the Church's contemporary campaign to reinvent itself as a Christian religion is merely a smoke screen to promote acceptance as a world religion.³¹ Although this is too crass and simplistic an assessment of Mormon motives, it is a point Shipps should take into consideration as she observes (or thinks she observes) a shift in consciousness from "Mormon" to "Latter-day Saint" to "Christian." The last, especially, is used mostly vis-à-vis outsiders as an indication of how Mormons wish to be perceived, much less (if at all), as an internalized self-image defining identity.

On another issue, while it goes without saying that the "Protestantization" of Mormonism had a momentum of its own, Shipps's arrival on the scene at a propitious moment may have helped in giving it a spin that served the interests of the Church. When I pointed this out to her, adding that I likened her role to that of the observer of subatomic particles as described by the Uncertainty Principle of Werner Heisenberg's quantum physics (the fact of observation affects the behavior of the particles), she modestly demurred, averring that she was merely the messenger. That the relationship between Shipps and the Mormon Church has been mutually beneficial is obvious. It is perhaps more interesting to sort out just exactly how she fits into the complicated politics of scholarship of an institution that makes claims on allegiance not unlike those demanded of scholars

29. Richard John Neuhaus, "The Public Square: Is Mormonism Christian?" *First Things*, March 2002, 97ff.

30. Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 76-93.

31. Abanes, *One Nation under Gods*, 384-89.

working in African American or American Indian history. It is here that the insider-outsider arithmetic, in its various combinations, may be helpful in locating Shipps more precisely. For example, Richard Bushman writes as an inside-insider and John Brooke as an outside-outsider, while Fawn Brodie wrote as an outside-insider. As an inside-outsider, Jan Shipps, in a way, is in an ideal position, sitting in a kind of strategic catbird seat, so that in the eyes of readers and reporters she can be perceived as having more credibility than those scholars whose allegiance is more firmly defined or who, because they are on the outside altogether, are seen as being less informed than those who have some connection to the "inside." In all these configurations, the politics of scholarship is perhaps least significant in relation to the outside-outsider position, and most significant to that of the inside-outsider position.

However, like all analogies, this one has its limitations. Shipps may be freer than insiders to discuss some controversial topics, such as race.³² However, denial of the lay priesthood to males of African descent, a policy rescinded in 1978, was largely a public-relations issue generating little internal controversy. Of much greater potential for internal conflict are gender issues, such as the demand, voiced by some Mormon feminists, for ordaining women to the priesthood. This is an issue that affects more than half of the adult membership of the Church and has been a matter of serious concern to the hierarchy. Shipps herself, in a fascinating essay, "Dangerous History," reports on a number of incidents involving Church authorities' action to curtail women's discussion of gender issues, even while conceding that she can understand why the authorities acted the way they did.³³ In a perceptively intuitive discussion, she points out that the larger issue involved in these cases may have been the question of who controls Mormon history. Though she did not address the question of how she herself fit into this picture at the time that she wrote this essay, the issue hit close to home in connection with the production of the dust jacket for *Sojourner in the Promised Land*. The original design included a photograph of the iconic Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. It was only after the jacket was already in production that

32. Jan Shipps, "Second Class Saints," *Colorado Quarterly* 11 (Autumn 1962): 183-90; "The Mormons: Looking Forward and Outward," *Christian Century*, August 16-23, 1978, 761-66.

33. Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 193-203.

the publisher learned that the Church would not give permission for the use of the photograph, even though Shipp's was using only an exterior shot taken by a photographer she had commissioned. Although I think the Reynolds's painting of Cache Valley is actually a better choice, the Church's move to disassociate Shipp's from the temple and Shipp's acquiescence are an interesting comment.

Six years earlier, in contrast, the Church entrusted Shipp's with preparing a scholarly edition of the rediscovered, important *Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), even though she was persuaded to accept as coeditor John W. Welch, at the time director of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), a Book of Mormon research institution that began as Welch's private foundation but which has since been integrated into BYU, while Welch himself, a professor at BYU's J. Reuben Clark Law School, has gone on to become editor of the influential *BYU Studies* and director of a publishing program that includes the output of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History.

An Ohio schoolteacher who became one of the early converts to Mormonism, McLellin quickly rose to the rank of apostle in the new religion. His journals record in great detail his role in promoting the fledgling church, providing important clues to the appeal of Mormonism in its earliest years, although the reader must be able to reimagine the lens through which McLellin viewed his world. McLellin presents a Mormonism dramatically different from the religion that had evolved by the time of Smith's murder in 1844, more biblical and more Christian. Quite likely a major reason why McLellin left the church in the late 1830s was his perception that it had veered sharply from its biblical roots. In her introduction, Shipp's emphasizes these differences, which point to a kinder, gentler, more Christian early Mormonism than that described in most histories—whether pro or con. As modern Mormonism is attempting to reemphasize these Christian origins on the assumption that they will enhance its worldwide appeal, the McLellin journals—especially given the spin Shipp's is putting on them—fit perfectly into this agenda. Shipp's sees in the diaries a foreshadowing of much of modern Mormonism, dispersed in the congregations of the diaspora—in but not of the world.

While most of the early Saints “gathered” in communities, many lived scattered here and there in the countryside, carrying on their daily

activities and attending church meetings, much like their Protestant neighbors, and much like modern Mormons in Boston, New York, Washington, or Charleston, or even Berlin and Tokyo. By way of sorting out the cultural relations of Mormons and their neighbors at the center and on the periphery, Shipps argues that Saints like McLellin were content to see themselves as *different* from those around them, while those in the gathered communities developed a profound sense of *otherness*—with belief (being largely invisible) as the defining criterion for *difference*, behavior made visible as the essential determinant for *otherness*.

These are useful insights. However, the difference between the gathered and scattered Saints was less a matter of belief and doctrine than of expediency or accident, so that the division becomes somewhat artificial. Shipps's argument misses a point she herself has made regarding polygamy. In the nineteenth century, it didn't matter that the majority of Mormons were monogamous. What mattered was that all lived under "the principle" and that polygamy defined Mormonism for the entire community. Likewise, until it was rescinded in the 1920s, the doctrine of the "gathering" defined Mormonism for all Saints, even for those who, out of expediency, were temporarily forced to live in the world. Impressing upon his audience the importance of the "gathering" at a time when it was still actively on-going, Apostle Orson Pratt declared: "None of the Saints can be dilatory upon this subject, and still retain the spirit of God. To neglect or be indifferent about gathering, is just as displeasing in the sight of God as to neglect or be indifferent about baptism for the remission of sins."³⁴ Although Pratt's statement was made after McLellin had left the Church and when the Salt Lake City settlement was a year old, the practice of gathering had begun very early, even before McLellin had become a Mormon. It is difficult to imagine that "Mormons in the countryside" did not *believe* in the principle of the gathering. Thus, the distinction between belief and practice appears to be somewhat arbitrary, at least in the early years.

Shipps's point seems most useful in sorting out the schism that occurred after Smith's death in 1844, when perhaps a third of the Saints refused to accept Brigham Young as Smith's successor. Young insisted on maintaining his predecessor's "Hebraisms," radical innovations such as plural marriage, temple worship, and the political kingdom (a theocratic

34. Orson Pratt, *Millennial Star* 10 (1848): 247.

government). Those who had developed doubts about these doctrines during Smith's life now made their break, later formed the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and remained in the Midwest—preferring to be seen merely as “different” from their neighbors, while the Saints moving west under Brigham Young defiantly asserted their “otherness.”

However, Shipp's attempt to apply McLellin's diaspora as a model for modern Mormonism is problematic, as is evident from her (on the whole) perceptive discussion of the Mormon diaspora, especially after World War II. Bringing the memory of their native Zion into the cities on both coasts and into the Midwest, these Mormon migrants recreated surrogate Zions, centering on newly constructed meetinghouses built according to standardized plans and therefore easily identified as Mormon—thus maintaining their identity of “gathered” Saints even as they made their way in the secular world. That is not to say, of course, that there is no difference between a self-perception of *being* other and of being *perceived* as such. Shipp's no doubt would argue that most modern Mormons would much prefer to be perceived as different, however strong their identity as “Deseret Saints” might be—and that this would be as true in both I-15 territory and along U.S. 89.

Related to this discussion is the question of the relative importance of the Bible in the Mormon canon. The idea that Mormonism was born in a biblical culture is obvious. It has been expressed with considerable sophistication and analytical depth by scholars such as Timothy Smith, Philip Barlow, and Grant Underwood, who argue that the Bible helped prospective converts to appreciate and understand the Book of Mormon.³⁵ It is not surprising that William McLellin was steeped in the Bible. So was Parley P. Pratt, another prominent Mormon missionary and apostle. But as Mormonism evolved, more and more of its cos-

35. Timothy L. Smith, “The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980), 3–21; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World View of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

mology transcended biblical origins.³⁶ McLellin may not have shared this perception, even though he left the Church in the late 1830s, in part because of objections to the “Hebraic” innovations. In any case, Mormonism, in its defining particularities, is identified not by its similarities but by its differences with mainstream Protestant American culture. I am reminded of Freud’s concept of the “narcissism of small differences,” a point Edward Pessen overlooked when he emphasized similarities over differences in his comparison of the antebellum North and South.³⁷ Of course Shipps is not unaware that, for a century and a half, the Saints were proud to call themselves a “peculiar people” (381). Yet while I agree with her that Mormons, on the whole, have been blending in with the larger culture, differences persist. Shipps herself seems of two minds, conceding in her epilogue that “in time,” it will be the Book of Mormon and temple worship that will define what it means to be a Latter-day Saint.

Consistent with the preceding discussion is my disagreement with Shipps regarding her take on John L. Brooke’s controversial *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The book won several awards, among them the prestigious Bancroft Prize in American History. In a major essay in *Sojourner*, Shipps charges that Brooke doesn’t know his Bible. If he did, the hermetic tradition to which he traces Mormon cosmology would be dwarfed by the biblicism of Mormon thought, as expressed for example in the McLellin journals.³⁸ However deficient Brooke may be in biblical scholarship, it is a fact that most nineteenth-century Americans were deeply immersed in the same Bible. Only some—most notably the Mormons—took their theology in the direction of hermetic perfectionism. Therefore, something other than the Bible must have been at work. It is clear, however, that by giving considerable weight to

36. Clyde R. Forsberg Jr., *Equal Rites? Mormonism, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), argues that much of this cosmology was already contained in a Masonic subtext underlying the Book of Mormon.

37. Edward Pessen, “How Different from Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?” *American Historical Review* 85, no. 5 (December 1980): 119–49.

38. Shipps, *Sojourner*, 210–11.

nonbiblical sources, Brooke supports a “new religious tradition” interpretation fitting less conveniently into Salt Lake City’s project of promoting Mormonism as an American world religion in the Christian mold.³⁹

Richard Bushman claims that Brooke’s evidence “has crumbled to dust,” though there may well be more than one way of reading the sources. Of course, there is a great deal more at stake for Bushman (as there was for Brodie) than for Brooke.

For one, Brooke does not have an agenda of proving Mormonism wrong. As an intellectual historian, he was merely pursuing strands in a genealogy of ideas that led him beyond the Bible to folk beliefs and traditions that could be traced back to European and British hermetic ideas that crossed the Atlantic with the early settlers. Thus, he contradicts not only the historiography of Mormon believers but also the functionalist historiography attempting to locate the origins of Mormonism in the dislocations and the anomie of antebellum America. It is clear that for apologists the latter was easier to deal with than Brooke’s approach. Thus, while the praise by secular historians has been high indeed, the onslaught from certain Mormon quarters has been savage—precisely because the work is so impressive. For this reason, there has been a great deal of deliberate misreading and misrepresentation of the work.⁴⁰ Contrary to some accusations, Brooke did not claim that Mormonism is an occult religion, only that some of its most distinctive theological beliefs can be traced to ideas derived from these traditions. Admittedly, it is a speculative work, and there are instances where Brooke may have overreached himself. Critics have latched on to such examples to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Shipp, however, was careful to temper her criticism with qualified praise so as not to imperil her outsider credentials—sometimes walking a tightrope while attempting to wear two hats.

Perhaps a telling illustration of the ambiguity of her position is her self-identification as a “birthright Methodist,” a choice of language clearly

39. A good example is Eric A. Eliason, ed., *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

40. The most savage attack is that of William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace, Or Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge,” *FARMS Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6 (1994): 1-58.

addressed to Mormons, who, Shipps knows, will read it in the light of their own understanding of what a “birthright Mormon” is. The term thus enables her to establish a boundary as an outsider, while allowing her access to the Mormon world.

At the same time, the burden of Shipps’s message is the fading away of birthright Mormons and their culture, their picturesque nineteenth-century temples preserved as historic artifacts (Shipps uses the appropriate analogy of a museum) (381), while a new generation performs temple work in nearly identical modernistic edifices around the globe—in the Jordan River Temple in suburban Salt Lake City in I-15 territory, in Accra, Toronto, London, Frankfurt, Sao Paulo, Sydney, Taipei, Tokyo, and more than a hundred other places. Unlike meetinghouses, which are open to all, temples are for sacred ordinances called “endowments,” marriages, and vicarious baptisms, and require a recommend for entry—granted after a searching interview to determine the “worthiness” of the candidate. As Shipps points out, these are sacred spaces representing a modern version of sacred time, a contemporary retreat from the temporal world. Though removed from the culture of the kingdom in the mountains of the American West, they represent a kind of miniature Zion (even more so than the meetinghouses), a reflection of the “particular culture” of memory for the many “birthright” Mormons living in the world abroad, who return to their roots in Manti or St. George when they retire (381). For many more, of course, these temples represent the only Mormon kingdom they will ever know.

Such changes do not come without some cost. Shipps, with her usually keen ear, reports that Mormon intellectuals used to say that they have a history, not a theology (385). But in the wake of dramatic changes, the past is being reshaped to serve the needs of the present, even as a more clearly defined theology serves as a guide to lead Mormons around the globe into the future. When Leonard Arrington became the first professional to be appointed Church Historian in 1972—a post traditionally held by an apostle—theological and historical priorities had not been sorted out, resulting in disagreements and misunderstandings. These led to the eventual removal of the newly created historical department to Brigham Young University with a new name—the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History (now Latter-day Saint History)—with Arrington still in charge.

However, on the question of who owns and controls the history of the Church, the highest leadership confirmed itself as the ultimate au-

thority. Even if it allowed considerable latitude to professionals, an occasional shot across the bow—such as the excommunication of Michael Quinn (who had already resigned from his professorship in the history department at BYU)—served as a warning. Nevertheless, Arrington's frank account of his *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), perhaps more candid than some of his historical works, showed considerable diplomatic skill in navigating the choppy waters of Church politics. After his death, a struggle ensued over the possession of his extensive papers, which he had bequeathed to Utah State University. Shippo did not report on this episode because it happened after the publication of *Sojourner*. An agreement between Church president Gordon B. Hinckley and Utah State University president Kermit Hall defused a potentially unpleasant fight by allowing most of the papers to remain at Utah State University while effecting the return of some where the Church's claims were beyond dispute.

Of course, the important question is how Shippo fits into these dramatic struggles and changes. In the early 1970s, she had served as a research fellow in the newly reorganized LDS Church Archives during the "Arrington Spring," as Dean L. May called it, and "Camelot," as Davis Bitton termed it.⁴¹ Beginning there but continuing over the next three decades, Shippo deepened her thorough knowledge of Mormon sources, made important contacts, and in time "became a virtual extension of the LDS public communications division,"⁴² explaining her sophisticated understanding of Mormonism to the outside world. Yet I would argue that equally important was her role in explaining Mormons to themselves, who like fish in an ocean are not always aware of the tides and currents surrounding them.⁴³

She continues that role in this fascinating book, although I detect a lessening enthusiasm for the role she plays among Mormon bureaucrats. I suspect nothing personal in this subtle change, merely a more overt assertion by Church authorities, not only of who owns Mormon history, but also of who is *perceived* as owning it, requiring a distancing from even the most

41. Davis Bitton, "Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir," *Dialogue* 16 (Fall 1983): 9-20.

42. Shippo, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, front flap of dust jacket.

43. I am indebted to Joyce Appleby for the image: "Republicanism and Ideology," *American Quarterly* 37 (Autumn 1985): 461-73.

sympathetic of inside-outsiders—though it does not necessarily signal the end of the long “Shipps honeymoon.” If there has been any alienation, it is more from the cultural Mormons, whether active or inactive, who perceive her as having had a hand in the process of modernization, her disavowals to the contrary notwithstanding. However, rather than confronting a fork in the road, the majority of Mormons appear to be seeking an accommodation between the old and the new, and may well see Shipps useful as an interpreter of this shift. Perhaps the reconstructed Nauvoo Temple is pointing the way, representing as it does the most radical departure from McLellin’s “Mormonism in the countryside” by the time the Saints were forced to abandon Illinois in 1846, while at the same time serving as a link to those modern temples that genuflect, if ever so slightly, in the direction of McLellin’s “Christianized” Mormonism.⁴⁴

Yet as the world changes, it is never easy to assess the costs and the benefits. I was rather startled when some years ago Harold Bloom detected an elegiac tone in my own work, though on reflection I think he is right.⁴⁵ Something will be lost as Mormonism marches into the modern world, monitored by Jan Shipps, or into the “post-Christian” era, welcomed by Harold Bloom—or if it becomes the kind of mega-religion predicted by sociologist Rodney Stark.⁴⁶ And I don’t mean only the picturesque byways of Mormon country along U.S. 89. Indeed, I have been told that plans are underway to designate U.S. 89 a historic highway—though it is hard to preserve a living past in a quasi-museum. Yet when I stopped in Ephraim, just north of Manti, for a bite to eat, I was able to strike up a conversation with some young people, students at the local college, who were open-minded and inquisitive⁴⁷—and, yes, they were Mormons—reminding me of the old days when, unlike today, there was an open, liberal spirit at

44. For example, some criticisms of Protestantism have been eliminated from the temple ceremony. Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*, 295.

45. Bloom, *The American Religion*, 92.

46. Ibid.; Rodney Stark, “The Rise of a New World Faith,” *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984): 18–27. Stark underestimates the influence and number of charismatic and pentecostal Christians. See Vinson Synan, *The Holiness–Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

47. An acquaintance who has a relative teaching at Snow College in Ephraim confirms the open-minded and inquisitive climate on the campus, with a student body predominantly Mormon.

Brigham Young University. If I may continue the I-15/U.S. 89 conceit, it may well be that the boundaries of the old Mormonism obviated the need for defensiveness and censorship, while it is in the brave new world of cosmopolitanism (BYU's motto is "The World Is Our Campus") that even some sculptures of Rodin were judged unfit for public display.⁴⁸

Yet it may be unfair to load this baggage on Jan Shippo. If in her sojourn in the promised land she has made a few enemies along with her many friends, she will always remain an insider to the latter. And while we all want to be loved by our friends and peers, what we want more is their respect. Respect she has earned, even from those who disagree with her. Someday the history of her sojourn among the Mormons will have to be written. Arguably she is one of the important historians and commentators on Mormonism in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Tanner Lecturer Harry Warner Bowdoin, Shippo "can be said to have done for Mormon studies what [Perry] Miller . . . did for Puritans."⁴⁹ Even those who may disagree with some of Shippo's conclusions will acknowledge that she pointed the way by asking the right questions.

A younger generation of scholars is pursuing many of these questions, as well as some of their own, in a fresh crop of impressive publications.⁵⁰ When I started this essay, I was giving serious thought to titling it "the end of Mormon history." Scores of historians deserve credit that this is not so. Not the least of these is Jan Shippo.

48. In 1997 the BYU Museum of Art was scheduled to have an exhibit of Rodin sculptures. University President Merrill Bateman ordered the exclusion of four pieces, including the famous *The Kiss*, because they were regarded as "inappropriate." *Deseret News*, November 14, 1997, B1, online edition.

49. Henry Warner Bowdoin, "From the Age of Science to an Age of Uncertainty: History and Mormon Studies in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 117.

50. See, for example, Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*; Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Forsberg, *Equal Rites*.