Egyptian." Therefore, we have no way to authenticate these as *hapax legomena*. Thomas' view that Nephi's slaying of Laban was a sign "he has started to grow up" (p. 153) is difficult to accept, since the rationale for the slaying seems essentially the same as the rationale for the Inquisition: "Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish, than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."

So while these essays are generally stimulating and worthwhile, they fail to demonstrate the kind of independent analysis that men with such credentials ought to be producing.

On The Way to Obsession

Richard H. Cracroft

Surely the Night by Claire Noall. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1972. 288 pp. $6.00.

Here is yet another novel about the sensitive and soul-torn nineteenth century Mormon woman, another proclamation that if it took men to match our mountains, it was only because both had been long overmatched by women. Claire Noall, however, has stirred another ingredient into the usual stew of the sensitive-woman-confronted-with-the-spectre-of-polygamy: woman's liberation. Yet Noall's is a carefully seasoned woman's lib, for the heroine, Lucy Muir, remains a faithful Latter-day Saint—she has her stew and eats it, too. Virginia Sorenson and Maurine Whipple rank with the gourmet chefs, but Claire Noall, who died in 1971, showed signs of being a highly respectable Mormon cook.

Surely the Night (the title is adapted from Psalm 139, "Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me") is the highly readable, thoroughly enjoyable story of Lucy Muir, a young and attractive Mormon who lives and loves in the Weber Valley of pioneer Utah. Trained by her Scottish mother as a midwife, Lucy becomes obsessed with the idea of becoming a medical doctor after a mother-daughter debate, following the death of a young mother in childbirth, as to whether the Lord or the Devil willed the woman's death. Lucy determines that she will devote her life to medicine and become a doctor. She finds support for her aim in a sermon by Brigham Young.

Enroute to Lucy's dream, Mrs. Noall leads the reader through some vivid and thoroughly researched insights into Mormon life in polygamous Utah in the late 1860s and early 1870s. A performance of the "Messiah" by a stake choir; a Mormon cornhusking and rag-carpet bee; a picnic, complete with rendition of "A Mormon Boy"; and a talk by Stake President and Apostle Lorenzo Snow—all provide lively and colorful insights into Mormon life in that era, as does her description of the coming of the railroad and the Mormons' recognition of the change and conflicts and gentile influence which the railroad will bring. In the Salt Lake section of the novel Noall vividly portrays the tensions between Mormon and gentile, and in her description of the Jordan River House, a large west-side mansion belonging to an apostle but used as a lying-in home for underground

wives, she captures realistically the ubiquitous fear of Mormons for the wrath of the "Spotters" who would send Mormon men to prison as "Cohabs." Lucy through her skillful handling of a serious typhoid case, her silence about Mormon underground affairs, and her hard-won reputation as one who, regardless of her peculiar goals and life, has remained true to her people, comes to serve both Mormon and gentile women, and thereby becomes an exciting vehicle for Noall's commentary on gentile and Mormon life during the period.

Lucy, like some modern women liberationists, may be too obsessed, too strident in her insistence on achieving her goal, and though Noall's characterizations may be often too shallow, too one-dimensional—especially in her treatment of Lucy's father, husband and children (the boy, at four, is still saying "Dadda"—either a slip or firm evidence that a mother's place *is* in the home)—still Noall's vivid portrayal of farm and city life in late nineteenth century Mormondom is a rich and valuable one. Her brave attempt to link the problem of the Mormon wife to the problem of the modern, unliberated Mormon (or gentile) woman, is a neat one, but the male (chauvinist) reader may find himself intellectually sympathetic with Lucy while emotionally grateful that she is, *laus deo,* somebody else's wife.

There are other faults: Some of the ends, if tied, are tied in slip knots. The appearance in the book of gentile Alec Strange is fraught with foreshadowing—but nothing ever comes of it, though a feeble attempt is made to link him to the scholarship awarded at the novel's end. Similarly, the use of a symbolic lake which Lucy ever desires to visit, but to which neither her father nor her husband will take her, is not very effective in its blatantness; and the transformation of the giddy sister into the solid and loving wife of the stake president is a bit sudden. On the whole, these flaws do not get in the way of the novel's readability, however, and occasionally Noall balances flaws with genuine touches of excellence. Such a touch is the symbolic opening, wherein Lucy is seen returning from helping her father aid a ewe that was having difficulty in dropping her lamb. Lucy's statement, "O aye, the ewe needed Pa, and Pa needed me," is a nice foreshadowing of the events of the novel, in which Lucy becomes convinced that the Lord needed her to assist Him in the birthing of His ewes.

Surely the Night is a good Mormon novel, full of the same kind of scholarship and good writing which characterize Noall's *Intimate Disciple,* about Willard Richards, and *Guardians of the Hearth,* about Mormon midwives. But, good as it is, *Surely the Night* lacks—what? Mythic dimension, perhaps. Or perhaps it is that Mormon readers today crave examination in fiction not of the well-documented plight of the polygamous wife, but of the universal and significant human experiences which such an anomaly as polygamy prevents us—and writers—from confronting. If we were to place our world-worn Mormon fingers on that spot where our mortality most hurts us, it would probably be on the spirit-flesh tension, on the in-the-world-yet-not-of-the-world challenge that defeats us regularly. Mormon novels which attempt to deal with such problems in a nineteenth century context somehow miss the mark, for polygamy garners the attention and the emotions of the reader, which, as in this novel, should rightfully be focused on the inner tensions on Lucy Muir Whumper.

Perhaps Mormons ought to have a root-beer toast similar to the Jewish toast, "Next year in Jerusalem"—perhaps "Next year—THE Mormon novel." Perhaps. Until then, *Surely the Night* is a thoroughly enjoyable diversion.