

the documents have been edited and transmitted. Regardless of how one feels about the validity of Redaction Criticism (e.g. either as leading to a reconstruction of the various editions of a text or simply as an imposition upon a text of the modern critic's imaginative and conjectured theory of textual genesis and development), Charlesworth applies that method to the Book of Mormon and the Pseudepigrapha in order to determine the earliest Messianic passages, as well as those which were added later. Documents containing allusions to the deeds of Jesus in the Pseudepigrapha are considered by Charlesworth to be Christian interpolations rather than prophetic insights. Likewise, the Book of Mormon passages which give specific details from Jesus' life are assumed to be the work of later editors rather than prophecies of the future. Since this methodology is typical of modern literary analysis of ancient texts, one can glean some idea of how the method works when applied to the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, the experiment does not validate the method; it simply illustrates it.

As in the case of Charlesworth, one must approach Krister Stendahl's paper knowing that it was written within a methodological framework quite foreign to most Latter-day Saints. The author treats both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon in Third Nephi as literary inventions rather than as talks given in history. Even so, the distinctions between the two sources are significant because they suggest that the Book of Mormon is not simply a careless plagiarism of the Biblical passage in question. Stendahl observes that consistently the specific terms "like altar and temple and Jerusalem are

gone" and that "Nephi does not see Jesus as a teacher in his community who takes the ongoing requirements of the Torah for granted. Much of the Jewishness of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is missing in Third Nephi, not surprising in a society which had been modified during six centuries of separation from Jewish influence. What at first appears critical of the Book of Mormon may, if Mormons do their homework, lead to greater understanding and appreciation of the Nephite record.

Not only is Jane Dillenberger willing to take some examples of "Mormon art" seriously, notably the large paintings of C. C. A. Christensen relating to the saga of Mormonism, but she in turn appeals to Mormons to take art seriously. Her challenge is stated in poignant terms at the end of her paper: "I would appeal to the Mormons to initiate a new 'cleaning of the temple'—to remove the illustrative, shallow socialist-realist-religious art, and wait the coming of artists who are equal to your epic history and your grand vision." This remark epitomizes a difficulty for Latter-day Saints when outsiders examine Mormons and Mormonism carefully. The non-Mormons see all too often that Mormons do not appear to take seriously enough the demands and expectations of the gospel in their personal study and in achieving excellence in religious learning. Instead, a less difficult path is commonly taken within the Church, that of taking *oneself* seriously. This results in a much more shallow and superficial public portrayal of the gospel than it deserves. *Reflections on Mormonism* hopefully will serve as a catalyst to stimulate better scriptural and artistic scholarship within the Restored Church.

The Poetic Mystique

The Grandmother Tree. By Marilyn McMeen Miller Brown. Provo, Utah: Art Publishers, 1978. xiii+56 pp., illus. \$3.95.

Mahanga: Pacific Poems. By Vernice Wineera Pere. Laie, Hawaii: Institute for Polynesian Studies (BYU-Hawaii), 1978. 39 pp., glossary, Paper \$3.00. Cloth \$9.00.

Reviewed by VENETA LEATHAM NIELSEN,
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Beyond the sentience and the craft, under the sound and shape and color of the poem, one seeks the mystique that synthesizes and sets forth a poet's real real-

ity. Marilyn McMeen Miller Brown's book of insights into the lives of women in a rural pioneer culture where womanly intelligence, intuition and ingenuity often more than equaled the obstinacy or the courage of the men, presents the reader with an image of unusual sensibility and strength.

In a poem entitled "Rocking Chair Judge" she juxtaposes upon the raw brutality of frontier discipline the perhaps perverse maternal urge to protect and even love the faulted sinner in spite of his sin, small or great. Rocking, pleating her handkerchief as if she were pleating up time, the old one recalls saving a boy from a grandfather's unreasoning punishment and, in a brave defiance, hiding and feeding an Indian in flight from certain death: Once out of the woods, an Indian limped, bloody, His blue lips trembling and begging for food./ Grandma gave him some bread from her larder./ "They are comin', I killed me my woman," he told her.

Some of Mrs. Brown's poems are almost pure narrative yet always lighted by the shine of compassion and love that foster and guard life for any child, old or young. Several poems imply the invaluable power of total identification with her subject so that she truly participates in the spirit of the woman she is experiencing. Such identification is in "Lesson" where, riding the horse her grandmother rode, the "druid shadow" becomes herself. In "Indian Playmate" she finds herself a mirror of that girl, in an interconnectedness that suggests profound spirituality. Rilke wrote, "When I create I am true." Often, reading Mrs. Brown's poems one is reminded of the lucent aura of understanding love which shines over her presences in a subtle resemblance not to any one poem but to Rilke.

For most of her readers, the appeal of this book will be in nostalgic episodes told by the grandmothers and shaped into free verse by the author with obvious delight. The humanity of these stories, the humor, the tenderness of touch make such stories as the hiding of a hen so Mama can't slay it for Sunday dinner, the charming off of warts with a rag from Grandpa's nightshirt, the ritual of Saturday night bath, the soap-making day, the

peach-canning day and other sunbeamed memories of "the olden days" nice to read. For me, the sense of kind and kindness is enough.

Poignant feeling for timeless primitive forces and for native traditions peculiar to her island home now "acculturated" by contact with mainland civilizations and their motorbikes, movies, and jukeboxes pervades *Mahanga* by Vernice Wineera Pere, a New Zealand poet of Maori, French and English ancestry. The best of her poems seem to speak a reverence for the irrecoverable lost heritage of time more rich and true. Two haiku crystallize this mood:

Premonition

A pale morning sky
moon of yellow tin-foil and
a black shag soaring.

Laie

The deepening night
sleeping village bordered by
the rumbling ocean.

Some of the poems in this collection are more nearly essay, written, because of a good ear for verbal rhythms and melody, in the line lengths of free verse. These deal openly with personal attitudes and opinions, and are good moral reading, such as in "Waiting Room," "Why Do We Smile," "Transcendental Thought," "Reflections," "Split Personalities."

The poem quality of those which deal with children and friends, teachers and pupils, is effective and affective, delicately achieved. But when the reader reads on more than one level, as in the homeland poems, power and mysticism combine to make the reading unforgettable. For example, in "Big Surf" the tides of ocean threatening the island become the tides of time and change, threatening to inundate her human world.

"—all our certainties
have come to grief
as we behold the thundering
turmoil of white water
smashing against the tenuous
off-shore reef
we dearly hope will hold.

"Acculturation", though poetry ends and moral essay takes over two thirds of the way down the page, both tells of and creates images of the meeting of East and West. In "Pake Cake and Prayer" Charlie Goo's store vibrantly illustrates and dramatizes the encounter with a carefully retrained lament for the coarsening of values by foreign interlopers.

the kids file in
hungry for pake cake and soda,
crack seed, won ton chips,
and nacho cheese doritos.

The juke box wails I love you
into the undistinguished morning.

"The Boy Named Pita," "Hokulea" and many others are complex expressions of what seems most valuable and moving in this poet's book. "Song from Kapiti" is

a testament of genuine and admirable dedication. Hers is poetry we must feel to read, and having read it, we are grateful to know another woman who not only honors her people and explains herself but glorifies the images of humanness.

I am she learning to sing
the sweet sad songs of a people's sorrow
I am the lone bird
alive in a limbo of longing,
enduring the winter world,
surviving
on the slim promise
of a future summer.

In such poetry there is no need of startling techniques or unusual firecracker associations, as it would be superfluous to hang exotic costumes on a soul. It is poetry that is needed, and reassuring.

Brief Notices

GENE A. SESSIONS

A Joseph Smith Chronology. By J. Christopher Conkling. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979. 286 pp., index, \$6.95.

For those souls who are either unaware of the seven-volume *History of the Church* (the so-called "Documentary History") or simply scared of its bulk, and for those strange sorts who enjoy reading laundry lists of events, here is a gem of small price. Offering the student of Mormonism an almost day-by-day account of the life of the Prophet, Conkling clothes his book in respectability by using footnotes and a name index. In many ways he is successful, for while *Chronology* is largely redundant, its handiness makes it quite useful, even to the professional historian more familiar with and unafraid of the stuff from which it came. As with most works drawn largely from secondary sources and "pseudepigrapha" such

as the *History of the Church*, it contains much information that is unreliable and much other that is more ancillary than informative. In the long analysis, such works as this one betray Mormonism's increasing membership in the league of the rushed, where there is no time for reading and comprehension, only for quick lists and ready answers. The trouble is that history grows more complex as time passes and as the present crowds with more information about it. When we end up reading and thinking about lists of names, dates and places, we know we have reached the point in the progress of history when there is just too much of it, and when our minds have decided that it is impossible to understand it. Maybe if we can just memorize the day-by-day, the step-by-step, history will lose some of its vastness, and some of its terror. Now, on with our list of books. . . .