

she combs it "clipped and brittle and drug-dead/ Into a basket/ In the bathroom/ Of my mother's home," and she joins her mother "in mourning."

The worst is yet to come. Her life waits on a tube that she compares to "Shiva, Preserver and Destroyer/ In one essence" where she must "trust the droplets/ That carry death/ Into my waiting vein/ To carry life instead" (p. 87). Perhaps writing these poems helped Meg find the final courage to orchestrate her death.

Meg didn't want to die. "God, God!

Not yet!" she cried. "Keep me longer/ From the darkness of those beds. . . . Let me be here to see/ With open eyes/ And well-loved people/ Just a call away" (p. 90). I mourn the loss of one who still had many poems to write, but I can rejoice in a life well-shared. I hear her calling to the autumn leaves, "Hold on! Hold on!" (p. 91) She sets her feet "Fearful but willing/ As the blind curves loom,/ Singing a prayer/ For a completed year. . ." (p. 97).

Margaret Rampton Munk. She showed me how to die. She showed me how to live.

Women Coping

Sideways to the Sun by Linda Sillitoe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 255 pp., \$7.95.

Reviewed by Gary Topping, curator of manuscripts at the Utah State Historical Society.

WHAT HAPPENS when a Mormon housewife, faithful to husband and church, encounters the dark side of human experience including adultery, child molestation, spouse abandonment, and divorce? In this fine first novel, Linda Sillitoe answers that question with a courage and honesty that is most welcome in Mormon literature.

She gives us the story of Megan Stevens, whose husband vanishes without warning or explanation, leaving her and their children to fend for themselves. Trying to cope with her bereavement and locate her husband, she draws strength from Kristen, a divorced woman in her ward, and from her own newly discovered inner resources. The novel contains no epiphanies, no sudden and magical solutions. Life simply deals rotten cards sometimes, Sillitoe is saying, and we have to play them as best we can, with all the patience, creativity, and good humor we can muster.

In working through her tribulation, Megan finds most of the expected sources

of support to be neutral at best. Her church is especially ambiguous; as a faithful married woman with children but no husband, she fits none of the Church's convenient categories, a fact that neither she nor the Church can immediately assimilate. The predictable Relief Society casseroles are as effective as aspirin in a cancer case, and other programs prove little better. Megan finds it helpful to establish a certain distance from the Church: she serves as a visiting teacher but attends only the church meetings that she expects will be personally useful. She discards her temple garments in a particularly memorable and significant passage, finding in the absence of their symbolic armor an opportunity to engage the world directly in a way she has not done before. Megan never leaves her church, but she finds that in coping with experiences for which it neither prepared her nor offers satisfying answers, she has to back away from it and find her own solutions.

Megan does not automatically flee to another man, or to men in general, for support. She engages in a mildly romantic relationship with another man, but he offers few practical solutions to either the day-to-day necessities of living or her recent emotional trauma. When her daughter is recruited as a possible plural wife by her seminary teacher, Megan realizes it is a