

ordained an apostle. Here then is a tantalizing glimpse of internal Church politics, but only a glimpse.

Clawson's life as an apostle is equally revealing of the practice of and attitudes toward post-Manifesto polygamy. As the Reed Smoot affair raged nationally and after Joseph F. Smith had presented the second manifesto in 1904, Clawson plunged into polygamy again, marrying twenty-three-year-old Pearl Udall of St. Johns, Arizona. Although Joseph F. Smith and many other apostles secretly approved of polygamy, publicly they disavowed knowledge of its practice. Clawson and the other members of the quorum sat in judgment of fellow apostles John W. Taylor and Matthias Cowley (who conducted Clawson's last marriage) and approved their excommunication. Clawson later served from 1910 to 1913 as president of the European Mission, headquartered in Liverpool. There he continued to deny and condemn the charge of polygamy, even as his own clandestine union with Pearl began to collapse. Between 19 and 1943 Clawson remained an active apostle and at the time of his death was next in line for the Church presidency.

Clawson was a twentieth-century Mormon apostle. But this biography offers relatively little twentieth-century information about him or his church. In part this is the fault of the authors and in part symptomatic of Mormon history. Hoopes and Hoopes are tied to the documentary evi-

dence they possess—Clawson's letters and extensive diaries. When these sources dry up in 1913, so does the authors' analysis of Clawson's life. The authors treat the last thirty years as "epilogue" to the nineteenth-century man—an unfortunate way to sum up the last third of a man's life. Other sources are surely available to fill in this and other gaps in their historical record, but as the authors note, most are inaccessible, given the restrictions the Church places on use of its archival holdings. I suppose we should be thankful that Clawson and his descendants had the foresight to withhold his journals from that black hole. Unfortunately contemporary Mormon history will remain safely nineteenth century, beyond scholarly scrutiny, awaiting the creation and approval of internally generated "truths" of the twentieth century.

Hoopes and Hoopes have created a very engaging biography that reads like a historical novel, complete with dialogue. They understand dramatic effect and have a flair for the colorful. Historians, however, will be uncomfortable with parts of that narrative. The bizarre style used to document quotations and sources and the numerous errors resulting from sloppy copy-editing will compound these fears. Despite its limitations, this book deserves a wide readership and careful consideration for the picture it paints—at once loving and critical—of one apostle, polygamy, and Mormon leadership.

A Poetic Legacy

The Owl on the Aerial by Clarice Short (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 177 pp., \$14.95.

Reviewed by Bethany Chaffin, creative writing instructor, editor, and author of eight published books and numerous articles.

IF CLARICE SHORT had not chosen to become a great educator, she might have developed into a major poet. Her poetic

output, excellent in quality but admittedly limited, reveals her as a woman dedicated to her major career, one who took precious time to express herself in poetry only when she could not stanch the flow of creativity.

Her second book, *The Owl on the Aerial*, published posthumously by Signature Books, is an interesting amalgam of her previously unpublished poetry and diary excerpts selected by Barbara Duree, with an appreciation by Jim Elledge.

Introduced to Short by her literary executor, Emma Lou Thayne, herself a fine writer and a personal friend of the teacher, readers of this volume will recognize Clarice Short as a person of excellence even before examining her work. But within the lines of her poetry lies the secret of the woman — if there is, indeed, a secret. How refreshing it is, in this world of poetic obscurity, to find a poet who capably illustrates what she sees, hears, and senses and carries the reader along with her for a thoroughly enjoyable journey without the trauma of mystic interpretation.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Short's poems, which encompass her love of the land and its beauty. Drawing upon childhood experiences, she writes passionately about the land and the life of a farmer, images flowing effortlessly through her work. And years later, after her retirement in New Mexico, her writing still manifests her abiding love for nature. Her life was filled with constant observation; living, loving, and absorbing everything around her, she then wrote of her experiences without pretense.

Although Short labored long years in her chosen profession, she hated her high school teaching assignments and was fired from her first job because she was unable to maintain discipline in the classroom. Despite this, she persevered, warning herself over and over that she must work harder. She earned a master's degree, then a Ph.D., and went on to teach first at the University of Kansas, then at the University of Utah for twenty-nine years, where she earned the reputation of scholar of note, honored (and feared) teacher, committee worker, and woman to be reckoned with. Students in her classroom-turned-cathedral listened in awe as Dr. Short revealed the intricacies of poems ranging from sonnets to villanelles and from poets as diverse as Christina Rossetti and Dylan Thomas.

Short's own writing became secondary to that of her students. Her first book of poems, *The Old One and the Wind* (Salt

Lake City: University of Utah Press), was not published until 1973 when Short was sixty-three years old. Always modest about her poems, she had been "unusually patient about collecting them," according to a *Virginia Quarterly Review*, which gave Short's work superior critical notice (*Owl*, p. 167).

Raised in the Ozarks in relative poverty, Clarice Short was anything but impoverished. Although she often appeared brusque and stubborn, she harbored within her splendid mind and spirit a richness and warmth illuminated by her interest in and tolerance for others' differences. "Methodist by baptism, Christian at large," Short confessed. "Utah didn't ask me to come here; I asked to come to Utah. . . . I like what I find here" (p. 6).

Actually, Clarice Short probably liked whatever she found, wherever she found herself. Early poems in *The Owl on the Aerial*, such as "Etchings and Print" (p. 21), display her love for her surroundings.

Winter is for etchings:
The magpie's blacks and whites,
The camp-robber's gray
Are right; and the simplified line
Of the apple boughs, the half-buried fence,
Suggest sleepers under the snow.

Simple yet elegant imagery. And on to more scholarly matters, note "Anatomy of Angels" (p. 20):

No one would dare to ascribe to the sons of
God
Structure like that of insects—six legs, four
wings.
Physiology of vision should go un-
questioned;
But, having entered this realm of heresy,
One cannot return to innocence again.
(If only a fossil seraph could be found!)

A somewhat cryptic last line often adds a touch of humor to Short's most profound verses.

We do not know
What sounds were made by the birds
That went into the silence
Of extinction, long ago.
We do know though

Two species endangered now
 Are trumpeter swans and whooping
 Cranes, and we might conclude
 It was whooping and trumpeting
 That laid them low.

Lines such as these, in "Sound and Silence" (p. 19), allow a glimpse of the very human woman who wrote in her journal, "It is pleasant to live in a community where neighbors call each other to look at a rainbow" (p. 9). She never seemed enamored of her scholarly tendencies, as these lines in "After Failing Some Examinations" (p. 103) exemplify:

Oh, wise old men, with your tired faces
 Look not with pity upon me.
 I have watched deer drink in secret places,
 In cool, green places you'll never see.

Clarice Short believed in balance. Loving nature as she did, and people as she must have, still she found herself possessed of a powerful intellect which cried out for expression. Often, as in "Tired Scholar" (p. 118), she referred to the varied aspects of her life:

A firm stone,
 Time, and a good chisel—
 Left alone
 Through sunlight, moonlight,
 Minds unbound,
 Let us carve a few clear words,
 Long pondered, sound.
 The weightiest thoughts consigned to leaves
 may flutter
 To swell a packrat's nest or choke a gutter.

With her farming and ranching background, both in the Ozarks and later in New Mexico where she retired, Short might have grown complacent about the beauties of nature, but she didn't. Enthralled until the end of her life, she wrote in her diary, "I never saw anything much prettier than the shadow of spruce on the snow and the intensely blue sky back of white aspens and the firs" (p. 82).

"I have lived two lives," she admitted, "—that of the farmer and rancher and that of a scholar" (p. 73). She might have added to those a sportswoman, traveler, teacher, and poet. *The Owl on the Aerial*

proves the latter, and the Clarice Short Memorial Fund for Teaching Excellence, established at her death, underscores her dedication to her chosen profession.

Short traveled widely toward the end of her life. From such exotic locations as Crete and Rome, she filled the role of poet as prophet and penned verses anticipating her own demise.

On the Shore of Crete

It would not be unfitting
 To die here on the shore of Crete
 Between mountains that look like my own
 And the sea whose rhythmic run up the
 smooth beach
 Sounds like the calm breathing of a large
 beast.

I have prepared as well as I could:
 Walked through fields of blossoming
 asphodel,
 Saved the right coin for the fare of passage,
 Laid by small stores of bread and wine.

But there is the problem of disposal:
 International regulations are involved;
 One may simply not be hid with a little
 earth
 So as not to become the food of scavengers.
 I have envied the sodden gull that for a
 while
 Is decently covered with feathers until the
 whole
 Is swept away by a wave to the great deep
 Or assimilated by the patient sand.

Protestant Cemetery: Rome

If one is half in love with easeful death,
 The unambitious pyramid of Cestius
 Marks an appealing place to leave the half
 Death-loving.

Yet the still life-loving half
 In May finds the graves rich with straw-
 berries,
 Wild ones of small sweet fruit and dark
 green leaves,
 Under white-petaled blooms.

Persephone

Ate six pomegranate seeds and ended sum-
 mer.
 Who knows what price the gentle dead may
 demand
 For wild strawberries, blossom and fruit
 together?