

Preaching the Gospel of Church and Sex: Mormon Women's Fiction in the *Young Woman's Journal*, 1889-1910

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IN 1889, UTAH NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS informed their audiences about the start of a new monthly magazine, the *Young Woman's Journal* (YWJ). Initiated and first edited by Susa Young Gates, the daughter of Mormonism's second prophet, this journal, directed to girls and young, unmarried women in the Latter-day Saint (LDS) church, was to contain "the most elevating ideas of the Daughters of Zion."¹ The YWJ published poems, stories, and articles, written overwhelmingly by women. It analyzed "great" books like *Anna Karenina* and discussed topics such as women's health, suffrage, and marriage. The YWJ reveals both similarities and differences in the experiences and attitudes of Mormon women and women nationally, and it shows that LDS women were concerned about promoting their church and their sex.

1. *Woman's Exponent* 18 (1 September 1889): 55. On Susa Young Gates, see Estelle Neff Caldwell, "Susa Young Gates," in *The History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints From November 1869 to June 1910*, Susa Young Gates, ed. (Salt Lake City: General Board of the YLMIA, 1911): 121-126; Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Literary Work" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1951); Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvey Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982): 325-337; Carolyn W. D. Person, "Susa Young Gates," in *Mormon Sisters: Women In Early Utah*, Claudia L. Bushman, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976): 199-223. In its initial years the YWJ reached from 1,500-2,000 young women annually, but the subscription list had greatly increased by 1900, and by 1910 between 14,000-15,000 girls received the journal (Gates, *History of YLMIA*, 112). The actual readership of the YWJ was significantly higher, however, since those who held subscriptions shared their copies with others.

The YWJ was not the first periodical directed to a female Mormon audience. In 1872 Mormon women began publishing the *Woman's Exponent*. Scholars have long acknowledged the *Woman's Exponent's* role as a feminist forum for Mormon women but have given less attention to the YWJ.² Both journals demonstrated a commitment to the church and to the women's movement.³ The YWJ, however, is unique in at least two respects. First, it was directed specifically to a younger audience. Second, the YWJ employed *fiction* as a way to communicate ideas. An 1890 article in the YWJ explained: "The aim and object of this publication has been set forth many times. . . . [T]he present generation demand amusement, and. . . lessons. . . are more vividly taught, more deeply impressed through the medium of books. . . than through homilies and sermons."⁴ Fictional stories in the YWJ focused particularly upon advancing the lessons of women's rights. The YWJ reveals a connection between women's fiction and women's activism in Utah during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and at the same time traces a fundamental shift in Mormon women's experiences and attitudes after Utah achieved statehood. Through the pages of the YWJ, experienced LDS women expressed their beliefs about their church and sex to their younger counterparts.

"SEEK YE OUT OF THE BEST BOOKS"

Fiction was not a medium historically available to Mormon women. For forty years the LDS church taught that members should "read truthful statements," and warned against the dangers of fiction. Reading fiction wasted time that could be spent reading scripture or otherwise building Zion. It also undermined the appeal of truth, which appeared tame and uninteresting in comparison to the romance and exaggeration of personality and circumstance in fictional stories. In the early 1880s Mormon anti-fictionists stepped up their attack. The completion of the transcontinental railroad and escalating migrations to Oregon and California brought the Saints increasingly into contact with "gentiles," their earthy ideas, and the shoddy dime novels and tabloids of the Eastern states. In addition, the Godbeite and Christian Science movements gen-

2. See Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Remember the Women of Zion': A Study of the Editorial Content of the *Woman's Exponent*, A Mormon Woman's Journal" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1977); Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The Woman's Exponent: Forty-two Years of Speaking for Woman," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Summer 1976): 222-39; Carol Lynn Pearson, *The Flight and the Nest* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc. 1975).

3. Scholars have used both journals to illustrate Mormon women's feminism. See Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Emmeline B. Wells: 'Am I Not A Woman and a Sister,'" *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 161-178.

4. *Young Woman's Journal* 1 (April 1890): 235.

erated concern among church leaders.⁵ George Q. Cannon, Mormon apostle, territorial legislator, and owner and editor of the *Juvenile Instructor*, a quasi-official periodical for youth, lead the assault on fiction, equating novel reading with the dangers of alcohol.⁶

During this same period, however, other LDS leaders realized that despite the church's position, Mormon youth *liked* to read fiction. Some leaders began to see that fiction could be "good, pure, elevating," and that it could be an "effective and pleasing method of teaching doctrine [and] illustrating principle."⁷ By 1890 the church had modified its stance on fiction. Instead of condemning all fiction, leaders made a distinction between "good" and "bad" fiction, and advocated the development of a Mormon "home literature." Through home literature the church could guard the youth of Zion, harness the power of the press, the creativity of its members, and further encourage self-reliance.⁸

Producing a distinctive literature became a special mission for the LDS community. Having long been involved in Utah's non-fiction literary endeavors and with a decided interest in securing sound influences for their children, women were especially enthusiastic about the crusade to construct an original body of writing.⁹ Moreover, Mormons, like other Americans at the time, believed that women possessed a unique spirit and temper, and LDS leaders encouraged women to use their distinct moral virtues "to the fullest extent for the establishment of righteousness on earth."¹⁰

Historians and literary scholars, however, usually treat early Mormon women's fiction with disdain. Deemed inartistic, imitative, and void of "the singular qualities of the concerns with which they [Mormons] were trying to deal," it is branded as sentimental and blatantly

5. Both of these movements advocated literary endeavors. The Godbeites, a group of apostate Mormons, started a literary magazine, and the Christian Scientists opened "reading rooms" in Utah. On the Godbeites see Grant H. Palmer, "The Godbeite Movement: A Dissent Against Temporal Control" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968); Ronald Walker, "The Commencement of the Godbeite Protest: Another View," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42 (Summer 1974): 217-231; Ronald Walker, "The Godbeite Protest in the Making of Modern Utah" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1977); Ronald Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

6. George Q. Cannon, "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 19 (15 Oct. 1884): 312.

7. Nephi Anderson, "A Plea for Fiction," *Improvement Era* 1 (January 1893): 186-188; B. H. Roberts, "Legitimate Fiction," *Contributor* 10 (Feb. 1889): 135-6.

8. On Mormon economic self-reliance see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1958).

9. Mormon women published fiction in all three Mormon periodicals for youth as well as their own novels and collections of short stories.

10. Susa Young Gates, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1930): 206.

didactic.¹¹ But feminist scholars are urging a re-evaluation of women's "sentimental" literature.¹² Their ideas help establish the value of LDS women's fiction.

Scholars such as Susan Harris and Nina Baym assert that women's fiction was a political enterprise.¹³ Written by women, for women, and about women, it provided a way for them to participate in the debate over women's access to power and contribute to the development of a positive gender consciousness.¹⁴ They suggest that while on the surface women's fiction appeared to simply reflect entrenched cultural values, a closer look reveals that it often questioned traditional social prescriptions.¹⁵ For instance, although many stories ended with women giving up autonomy and worldly aspirations, they did so only after presenting other possibilities for those women, showing their desires for achievement, challenging the idea of female subordination, and identifying conflicting definitions of womanhood.¹⁶ Underneath contrived plot lines and lofty language, Mormon women's fiction reveals how its authors understood the world and their place in it. Their work, however stylistically immature, emerges as a valuable source for looking at the specific concerns of LDS women.

"EVE'S CURSE"

The YWJ emerged not only at the same time Mormon leaders embraced fiction as a suitable means for teaching, but also during a time in which the LDS church faced severe attacks on its unique beliefs and place in American society. These attacks specifically targeted polygamy.

11. See Matthew Durrant and Neal E. Lambert, "From Foe to Friend: The Mormon Embrace of Fiction," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 19 (Fall 1982): 325-339; Edward A. Geary, "Women Regionalists of Mormon Country," *Kate Chopin Newsletter* 2 (Fall, 1976): 20-28.

12. See Barbara Bardes, and Susan Gossett, *Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth Century American Fiction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Mary Kelly, "Sentimentalists: Promise and Betrayal in the Home," *Fiction by American Women*, Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua, ed. (Port Washington, New York: Assoc. Faculty Press, Inc., 1983), 11-19; Joyce W. Warren, ed., *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Nina Baym, *Feminism and American Literary History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

13. Bardes, *Declarations of Independence*, 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 4.

15. Nina Baym, *Novel, Readers and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 172.

16. See Susan Harris, "'But is it any good?': Evaluating Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction," in *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*, Joyce W. Warren, ed. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 265-271; Kelly, "Sentimentalists."

In 1870, when Utah territory extended suffrage rights to women, the federal government and national women's rights leaders expected LDS women to vote themselves out of the purportedly degrading practice.¹⁷ When they did not, national political leaders took it upon themselves to rid the country of this presumed evil. In the early 1880s Congress passed severe anti-polygamy legislation, culminating in 1887 with the *Edmunds Tucker Act*, which made polygamy a crime, disincorporated the Mormon church, and disfranchised the women of Utah. LDS women, as believers and active suffragists, fought against it. They used their church organization, the Relief Society, to educate the people and to organize mass meetings, petitions, and conferences. Mormon women, including a number of YWJ fiction writers, personally pleaded with Congress, the President, and with national women's rights leaders to help them retain their right to vote and to practice their religion.¹⁸

Understandably, national suffrage leaders found reconciling Mormon women's dual commitments to women's rights and to a seemingly perverse and patriarchal religion difficult.¹⁹ LDS women, however, argued that their religion provided the basis for their feminist beliefs. They saw "the real elevation of woman" as one of the "prime objects" of those

17. Before Congress instituted a territorial government in Utah, women held the franchise in civic matters between 1847-1852. They could also vote on ecclesiastical matters under the Mormon doctrine of Common Consent, introduced by Joseph Smith three months after the church was organized.

18. There is an extensive literature on Mormon women and the suffrage movement. In addition to works previously cited, see Thomas G. Alexander, "An Experiment In Progressive Legislation: The Granting of Woman Suffrage In Utah In 1870," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (1970):20-30; Lisa Bryner Bohman, "A Fresh Perspective: The Woman Suffrage Associations of Beaver and Farmington, Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59 (Winter 1991): 4-21; Jill C. Mulvey, "Eliza R. Snow and The Woman Question," *BYU Studies* 16 (Winter 1976): 250-264; Leon C. Thurgood, "An Analysis of the Rhetoric Used by Mormon Women to Argue Equal Suffrage in Utah 1870-1896" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1973); Lola Van Wagenen, "In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 31-43; Jean Bickmore White, "Woman's Place Is in the Constitution: The Struggle for Equal Rights in Utah in 1895," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42 (Fall 1974): 344-369.

19. This essay draws on a vast scholarship which shows that Mormon women formed their own brand of feminism that allowed them to express progressive ideas about women and allegiance to their patriarchal religion. In addition to works previously cited, see Davis Bitton, "Polygamy Defended: One Side of a Nineteenth-Century Polemic," in *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays*, Davis Bitton, ed. (University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 1994); Judith Rasmussen Dushku, "Feminists," *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, (Olympus Publishing Co., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1976):194-5; Lawrence Foster, "From Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 3-21; Joan Smyth Iversen, "A Debate on the American Home: The Antipolygamy Controversy, 1880-1890," *Journal of the*

who received the "Gospel light" and believed that the establishment of the Relief Society in 1842 represented the "dawning of a new age" for women which would eventually restore the "natural" equality of the sexes.²⁰ Susa Young Gates considered it "the earthly beginning of woman's emancipation," and many early Mormon women saw the 1848 Seneca Falls convention as the "temporal" manifestation of the "spiritual" equality their new female organization represented.²¹ Although the nineteenth century Mormon church remained a patriarchal organization, primarily guided by a male hierarchy, Mormon women exercised a remarkable degree of authority within the church. The Relief Society was a charitable organization that sought to alleviate the physical needs of church members, but the women in this society also discussed and practiced spiritual gifts such as healing the sick.²² Eliza R. Snow, a founding member and the second president of the Relief Society (a position she held until her death), claimed that all worthy sisters "not only have the right, but should feel it a duty. . .to administer to our sisters in these [priesthood] ordinances, which God has graciously committed to His daughters as well as to His sons."²³ Snow and other Mormon women performed priesthood ordinances and were referred to as "priestesses." Some male church leaders even called Susa Young Gates the 13th apos-

History of Sexuality 1 (April 1991): 585-602; Joan Iversen, "The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship: Personal and Political Quandaries," *Frontiers* 11 (1990): 8-16; Joan Iversen, "Feminist Implications of Mormon Polygamy," *Feminist Studies* 10 (Fall 1984): 505-522; Anne Firor Scott, "Mormon Women, Other Women: Paradoxes and Challenges," *Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986-87): 3-19; Lola Van Wagenen, "Sister Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870-1896" (M.A. thesis, New York University, 1991).

20. "Eve's Curse: Is it Never To Be Removed?" *Woman's Exponent* 4 (1 July 1875): 22. See Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992); Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Emmeline B. Wells," 171-173.

21. See Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The Leading Sisters: A Female Hierarchy in Nineteenth Century Mormon Society," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982):25-39. Susa Young Gates, "The Open Door for Women," *YWJ* 16 (March 1905): 119. Louisa Greene Richards, *Woman's Exponent* 29 (Jan. 1900 [1901]): 69. Most statements on the connections between the Relief Society and the woman's movement were made after 1870, perhaps because only after this date were LDS women required to articulate their feminist views to non-Mormons.

22. The practice of such spiritual gifts later became the province of male priesthood holders. See Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987): 111-150; Linda King Newell, "A Gift Given A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women," *Sunstone* 6 (Sept.-Oct., 1981): 16-25.

23. Eliza R. Snow, *Woman's Exponent* 13 (15 September 1884): 61.

tle.²⁴ Although LDS women and their organizations lost much of their autonomy in the twentieth century, early Mormon women defended their religion as liberating, and used its principles to form their own distinct brand of feminism.²⁵

When LDS women became involved with the national suffrage movement during the 1870s, they not only readily accepted its expansive ideology, but they also drew from their leadership and organizational experience to build a strong women's rights movement in Utah. Local Relief Societies often served as the nucleus of community suffrage associations, and many female church leaders participated in national and international women's rights conferences, became officers in the National Woman Suffrage Association, and established close friendships with women such as Susan B. Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw.²⁶

What most distinguished and even sometimes estranged Mormon women from national women's rights leaders was their defense of polygamy. Many Mormon women actually linked their feminism to the practice. Plural marriage provided women with strong female networks and helped them achieve a degree of independence.²⁷ It freed some women from household and child-care obligations, compelled others to become financially independent, and provided a means for limiting family size (they presumably had sex less often). Polygamist wives often encountered difficulties as they tried to articulate, in acceptable nineteenth century terms, the independence they felt plural marriage gave them. Polygamy rejected Victorian ideals of monogamy, romantic love, and

24. The Mormon church was and is headed by a prophet and twelve apostles (all male).

25. Many of the works previously cited in this essay explore Mormon women's loss of autonomy—in their personal lives and church organizations during the twentieth century. There seems to be a connection between the progressive era drive to build an efficient and bureaucratic state and the major re-structuring of the Mormon church, which is what took away much of this female autonomy. See also Claudia L. Bushman, "Mystics and Healers," in *Mormon Sisters: Women In Early Utah*, Claudia L. Bushman, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976), 1-23; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 80-110.

26. Works previously cited in this section document some of the personal and public interaction between Mormon women and national woman's rights advocates.

27. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (1975): 1-29; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Sisters, Sister Wives, Sisters in the Faith: Support Systems among Nineteenth Century Mormon Women," manuscript in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives; Stephanie Smith Goodson, "Plural Wives," in *Mormon Sisters: Women In Early Utah*, Claudia L. Bushman, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976), 89-111.

nuclear families—ideals some *modern* feminists consider impediments to women's autonomy, but that most nineteenth century feminists faithfully supported.²⁸

Passage of the *Edmunds Tucker Act* enraged LDS women. It disrupted families, took away their right to vote and act as full citizens, and effectively ended a social experiment many LDS women had come to regard, or at least to defend, as liberating. Although not all Mormons personally accepted the "doctrine" of plural marriage and most did not practice polygamy, church members rallied together to defend their right to this "holy principle" until the church officially rescinded it with the *Woodruff Manifesto* in 1890.²⁹ Although this declaration surprised and confused many members, Mormons struggled to put polygamy behind them and focused on convincing the country that they shared America's basic values.

UTAH'S SCRIBBLING WOMEN

The YWJ's emergence in the late 1880s with Susa Young Gates as its creator and editor is not surprising. Gates was among the most outspoken promoters of the Home Literature movement and a prolific writer herself. She also defended polygamy and zealously supported women's rights.³⁰ As the daughter of Mormonism's most famous polygamist, Gates often had to defend Mormon women to her non-Mormon associates. Gates and other LDS women, however, found that explaining their positions on church and sex to outsiders was less important than teaching them to their younger "sisters" in the gospel.

Writing fiction for the YWJ proved an attractive way for many LDS women to express their thoughts on Mormonism and gender to a new generation. Between 1906 and 1908, for example, twenty different women contributed fiction annually to the YWJ.³¹ Like Gates, some of these women were well-connected to the church hierarchy or held

28. See Joan Iverson, "Feminist Implications of Mormon Polygamy," 505-522; Judith Rasmussen Dushku, "Feminists," 194-5.

29. See Bitton, "Polygamy Defended," 34-53; Nancy Tate Dredge, "Victims of the Conflict," in *Mormon Sisters: Women In Early Utah*, Claudia L. Bushman, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976), 133-155; David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Polygamy Defenses, in Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982): 321-366.

30. While she advocated women's suffrage and feminist ideas before her editorship, Gates became one of Utah's foremost women's rights leaders in the 1890s, speaking at national and international women's conferences, serving as press secretary for the National Woman Suffrage Association, and keeping a personal correspondence with Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

31. This figure does not include an average of two writers each year who wrote under an unidentifiable pseudonym or initials. Of the women contributing during 1906 and 1907,

church leadership positions themselves, and many were active in the women's rights movement. Mormon women fiction writers, however, did not all fit the same mold. Some raised large families while others remained childless. The group included university professors as well as women with little formal education, legislators and homemakers, immigrants and native Utahans, plural wives and unmarried women. Yet Mormon culture and the historical time in which they lived shaped all these writers' lives and literature. YWJ fiction is most striking for what it reveals about these women's shared commitments to Mormonism, independent womanhood, and for what it communicated to young LDS girls growing up in an era that brought changes to both women and Mormons.

"WHAT CAN WE DO WITH OUR GIRLS?"

The YWJ emerged just as Mormons abandoned the practice of plural marriage, Utah women lost the right to vote, increasing numbers of non-Mormons passed through or settled in the territory, and as Utah began an earnest campaign for statehood that included the push for woman's suffrage. These issues inform the fiction of the YWJ between 1889 and 1896 when Utah became a state.

Three themes emerge from YWJ fiction during these years: women's equality, polygamy, and Mormon religious doctrines. First, Mormon women wanted to instill in their daughters and younger sisters in the gospel a sense of independence—an understanding of themselves as individuals with the same rights as men. Second, through their fiction, these writers challenged images of Mormon women, especially polygamous women, as degraded slaves. They sought to explain plural marriage and why it went wrong—to establish it as an honorable legacy. Third, LDS women writers also used fiction to teach church doctrines. Faced with an influx of non-believers, who might lead Mormon youth astray, and the confusion and doubt created by the *Woodruff Manifesto*, YWJ authors emphatically affirmed their religious beliefs. Their works insisted on the importance of "gospel truths," and on the differences

eight contributed two or more stories (this counts serials as one story), and in 1908, three women contributed two or more stories. Five women contributed fiction in all three years, four women contributed for two of the years, and an average of seven women contributed only once during the three-year time period. Figures for earlier volumes are more difficult to determine because the "Contents" of the YWJ did not list authors or fiction separate from other literary works. Earlier writers also had a greater tendency either not to sign their work or to use pseudonyms. For 1899 and 1901, ten different women fiction writers can be identified, and the figure for 1903 is sixteen.

between Mormons and the outside world. Three serials demonstrate the ways that LDS women's fiction explored these themes.³²

"The Western Boom," by Ellen Jakeman,³³ centered on a young Mormon woman, Mrs. Lawson, who married outside her faith and left Utah. Lawson soon realized the contrast between her husband's "standard of the world" and her own.³⁴ He dressed her elegantly, knowing "that a well dressed and handsome wife was a good advertisement for a business man," while at the same time he refused to help the poor. Mrs. Lawson reminisced about her father who "had always spoken and acted as if he were but the steward of his wealth and that what his family did not *need* belonged to the poor."³⁵ She learned her lesson well, that "no girl properly taught in the principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can ever accept the counterfeits [read: non-Mormon men] of the world and be satisfied."³⁶

LDS women were deeply concerned about teaching this lesson. Increased contact with the outside world undermined Mormon notions of self-sufficiency and retrenchment. More importantly, LDS women feared that the end of polygamy reduced Mormon women's chances to wed within their faith and made "gentile" men more attractive marriage partners. One editorial asked its audience to "notice the great preponderance of girls over boys, . . . then subtract. . . the young men who are not as respectable as they might be." The author encouraged girls to choose "honorable" spinsterhood over the "hollow farce" of an ungodly marriage, noting, "today single women are spoken of respectfully, and marriage is at a discount."³⁷ Her editorial concluded with, "What an emancipation!"³⁸

Jakeman's story highlighted other concerns Mormon women had

32. Fiction during these years usually took the form of long-running serials or short sketches. The short pieces, however, are sometimes hard to classify as fiction. Since the serials are easily identified as fiction, and since they were more readily identified as fiction by the readers of the YWJ, the short pieces have not been chosen to represent this period—although they resonate the same three themes.

33. Jakeman was a member of the Woman's Press Club, president of the Sanpete Country Suffrage Association, and a plural wife.

34. Ellen Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (Nov. 1890): 55.

35. Ibid.

36. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (March 1891): 252.

37. "Our Girls," YWJ 2 (July 1891): 477.

38. Census figures show that in 1890 and 1900, over fifty per cent of Utah's population was male. Statistics do not reveal, however, the proportion of "worthy" men to women, nor can they dismiss *perceived* threats. See Robert P. Porter, and Carroll David Wright, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1892-97), lxxviii; "Population General Report and Analysis," *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, prepared under the supervision of William C. Hunt, Chief Statistician for Population (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1914), 1: 270.

about marriage—concerns that demonstrated a commitment to feminist ideas. At first Mrs. Lawson hid her unhappiness and sought to make amends when her husband was displeased. Jakeman narrated:

She was learning to crush back sorrow into her soul, to feed upon the vitality of her youth, that he might not see it and be annoyed, and he congratulated himself, that because he could not see it, that it did not exist; and to deceive her (for her own good) to decide what was good for her, and to take away her womanhood and treat her like a child.³⁹

At the same time, Mr. Lawson concealed a letter to his wife from "her folks in Utah." When she discovered his deceit, Mrs. Lawson protested that he would not like her to "take the same liberty," to which Mr. Lawson responded with: "A husband may do many things with perfect propriety that would be very unbecoming a wife."⁴⁰ Mrs. Lawson then reflected with "trepidation, that he seemed to consider her so absolutely his that he might treat her as a child."⁴¹ Her uneasiness deepened when, for the first time, he called her "Mrs. Lawson."⁴² She responded by throwing back her head, and giving "way to an irresistible impulse to laugh, and long, loud and ringing came the unnatural sound from the white agonized lips, and Mrs. Lawson fell full length on the floor like one dead."⁴³ This episode led the Lawson's maid to declare: "Men are cowards, brutes, hypocrites, deceivers, goats!" and Jakeman to proclaim:

Oh! the love that men have for women is. . . often deadly in its selfishness. . . . [M]en. . . demand that a woman yield her name and person to the marriage vow. . . her habits of life, taste in dress and society, principles, religion, and the very teachings that she received at her mother's knee. Before marriage he is a humble slave, afterward, too often a heartless and unconscious tyrant.⁴⁴

Mrs. Lawson again asserted her independence, this time by giving money to a tramp. After her "simple act of justice," Mrs. Lawson walked "proudly out of the room. . . without waiting to hear what Mr. Lawson would say."⁴⁵ Although angry, Mr. Lawson could not help but "admire what he had been unable to crush out—her truth."⁴⁶

39. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (Nov. 1890): 56.

40. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (Dec. 1890): 106-7.

41. Ibid.

42. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (Jan. 1891): 154.

43. Ibid., 155.

44. Ibid., 159.

45. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (March 1891): 255.

46. Ibid.

Jakeman, like many of her fellow Mormon women writers, believed in sexual equality. A YWJ editorial insisted: "Woman, belonging to herself and being dependent only on her reason, has the same rights as man to liberty and equality."⁴⁷ An 1890 article suggested that: "In times past, women have. . .done many improper things; and one of them is they often preferred men's opinions to their own and even yielded points of conscience. . .[A] course of self-reliance and self-assertion will restore our credit."⁴⁸ A report to YWJ readers on the national women's council maintained: "There is no difference between the intelligent woman and the intelligent man."⁴⁹ And in an address before the National Woman's Suffrage Convention, reprinted in the YWJ, Emily S. Richards declared: "Equal civil and political rights is largely the natural and normal outcome of Utah settlement. . .[T]here has been a constant tendency toward independence, self-culture and self-reliance among women."⁵⁰ Mormon women's fiction urged young LDS women to demand this independence and equality. It also sought to defend plural marriage, a practice that non-Mormons saw as contrary to feminist principles.

The letter that Mr. Lawson withheld from his wife carried news about the "crusade against polygamy." Its author lamented the suffering of families and hypocrisy of the officials conducting the "inquisition," saying, "if they were morally clean themselves; if they really cared for morality I could believe them sincere."⁵¹ Mrs. Lawson was shocked to find her husband unsympathetic to the situation. She reflected:

Knowing the cause of his [her uncle's] imprisonment, the honor and nobility of his character, the esteem in which he was held by the community. . .it had never occurred to her that her husband would look upon him in any other light than a political prisoner, as indeed, most of the honorable men outside of the Mormon Church, and acquainted with surrounding conditions did.⁵²

Jakeman later explained that the true source of depravity in the world lay in its double moral standard. "A man's virtue," she asserted, "must be preserved as sacredly inviolate as that of the purest woman."⁵³ Most Mormon women did not make the connection that polygamy in some ways *sanctified* a different sexual standard for men. Instead,

47. YWJ 1 (March 1890): 175.

48. Santiago [James H. Martineau], "Woman's Power," YWJ 1 (August 1890): 406.

49. "The National Women's Council," YWJ 2 (April 1891): 317.

50. Emily S. Richards, "Address delivered before the National Woman's Suffrage Convention held in Washington, D C, January 27, 1896," *Emily S. Richards Collected Discourses* 4.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (Jan. 1891): 154.

53. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (June 1891): 405.

they defended polygamy as a way to solve the problem of men's licentiousness.⁵⁴

Non-Mormons often saw polygamy as "a sort of barbarous slavery."⁵⁵ With the *Woodruff Manifesto*, LDS women not only had to defend polygamy to those outside the church, but to young women in the church who saw it destroyed—who saw families torn apart and their mothers' way of life ridiculed and condemned. One plural wife's child explained:

After the Manifesto came the hardest time. Up until then people practiced polygamy because of their religion. . . they had the consolation that they were doing right. . . The persecution did not matter—but when the Church renounced polygamy all the heroism was gone.⁵⁶

Women like Jakeman worried that the new generation would become disillusioned. They themselves were perhaps disillusioned, and needed to re-affirm their beliefs and legitimize their lives. They asserted that polygamy was not a shameful legacy, and that Mormon women "have many advantages over the women of the outside world, given us through the gospel."⁵⁷ Fiction writers stressed that rather than enslave women, polygamy represented a righteous principal that outsiders and even some Mormons misunderstood. The prophet had revoked the practice only because of such misapprehension.

Gender related issues were not Jakeman's only concern. She and other LDS women writers also affirmed Mormon religious tenets in their fiction. Although women sometimes accompanied their husbands on proselytizing missions, the church did not specifically invite women to serve as missionaries, or "certify" them as such, prior to 1898.⁵⁸ The church did, however, "call" women to do other types of "mission work."

54. There were exceptions, including Emma Smith, the prophet Joseph's first wife, who "saw the new system as perpetuating rather than eliminating a double standard of moral conduct for men and women." See Jill Mulvey Derr, "'Strength in Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood" in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Cultural and Historical Perspective*, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 161.

55. Delia Fish, "Words of Encouragement," *YWJ* 1 (April 1890): 227.

56. Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, 439.

57. Fish, "Words of Encouragement," 227.

58. Missionary work carried a certain degree of honor and prestige. Men who served the church as missionaries were considered more worthy of a Mormon woman's attentions and the respect of the community than those who were not missionaries. It was a source of status that women initially had access to only through men—either through marriage to a returned missionary or by accompanying a spouse on a mission. See Maxine Hanks, "Sister Missionaries and Authority," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, Maxine Hanks ed., (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 315-334.

Brigham Young officially appointed Louisa Greene Richards to the duties of her "calling" as editor of the *Woman's Exponent*, as if it were a "mission," and Eliza R. Snow appointed Bathsheba W. Smith "on a mission to preach retrenchment all through the South. . .[and] woman's rights. . .if she wished."⁵⁹ Gates was likewise "set apart" to perform her editorial duties, and a later YWJ editor felt "as much called of God as any missionary" to do her new work.⁶⁰ While individual fiction writers did not receive formal "callings" to write for the journal, they considered their literary efforts commensurate with missionary work.⁶¹ Mormon women were told that if they assisted with "home industries," they were "doing just as much as an Elder who went forth to preach the Gospel."⁶² Writing fiction helped build Zion and offered women an opportunity to interpret religious principles. Mormon women's fiction reveals how its authors defined church doctrine and which beliefs the church's women considered most important.

Throughout "The Western Boom," Jakeman incorporated basic Christian concepts. The usual faith, repentance, and baptism trilogy appeared in each episode. But Jakeman explored uniquely Mormon beliefs as well. Her story affirmed the significance of temple work and the Mormon belief that righteous families would be reunited and live together eternally. An old man miraculously saved Mrs. Lawson's child from the fire because the child had "a great work to do for its dead ancestors," and a repentant apostate revealed that in committing adultery he had sinned both against his wife and against God, "inasmuch as I had entered into holy covenants with Him."⁶³ The gospel principles Jakeman explored carried a special appeal for Mormon women. Women took comfort in the thought that, according to Mormon doctrine, they could be with their families forever, and that they could participate in Mormonism's most important ordinances—those that took place in the temple.

Other serials communicated the same themes as Jakeman's. Louisa Greene Richards'⁶⁴ story, "Lights and Shades," contrasted two women—Gwen and Chloe. Gwen, "dear clever girl that she was," began her "married life right" by insisting that her fiancée, Jacob, kneel with her to pray for guidance and meet with the local Bishop before taking such an

59. *Ibid.*, 318.

60. Gates, *History of the YLMIA*, 115.

61. One volume of the YWJ was even sent gratis to Mormon missionaries ca.1900. (*Ibid.*, 114.)

62. Quoted in Derr, "Strength in Our Union," 174.

63. Jakeman, "The Western Boom," YWJ 2 (July 1891): 451, (June 1891): 405. Mormons married in the temple made covenants to both their spouse and God.

64. Richards was the first editor of the *Woman's Exponent*, a member of the Woman's Press Club, and a polygamist's wife.

important step.⁶⁵ Chloe Lee, on the other hand, hastily wed Edward, a young stranger. When the church requested both husbands to leave home for a few months to help a company of emigrants, Chloe "moaned" and "cried," while Gwen stood firm and told her to "be a woman—be brave."⁶⁶

Gwen embodied Richards' ideals of Mormon womanhood. Prudent and independent, she also wanted to know about polygamy. On her own initiative she approached the Bishop's two wives to "inquire. . . the secret of the success they were making in a life which she knew. . . was difficult to live."⁶⁷ They acknowledged having to learn "one, two, or three little lessons," but claimed they "never had any just cause for jealousy" and that with the Lord's Spirit, "there can be no difficulty in living in plurality, any more than there is out of it."⁶⁸ The first wife further explained: "that some of our people enter into that sacred order without due reflection or preparation and before the Lord has actually revealed it to them; and so they make failures of it."⁶⁹ Richards presented polygamy as an ideal. Only "worthy" men and women who prepared themselves were "called" to practice plural marriage. Furthermore, she explicitly linked her feminism to polygamy. Gwen, the independent woman, *wanted* to be a plural wife. It was she who initiated discussion on the topic and who "joyously breathed the covenant which made her one with them [her husband and another wife] forever."⁷⁰ Richards also showed that polygamy created strong female relationships, not immoral men—the Bishop's wives felt drawn toward each other, and Gwen was attracted to these two women as well. "Lights and Shades" explained to its readers that the *Manifesto* came, not just because of pressure from outside Utah, but also because many Mormons did not understand and live the practice correctly. Polygamy empowered rather than enslaved women, and those who "lived in plurality" deserved respect.

Plural marriage was not the only religious principle that Richards discussed. Her story referred to prayer, faith, obedience, and it explored more complex gospel ideas. One scene depicted Gwen receiving personal revelation. With "her spirit eyes," she saw mothers happily reunited with their children who had died in "baby innocence."⁷¹ Her own

65. Lulu Greene Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Oct. 1890): 13, (Nov. 1890): 49.

66. Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Dec. 1890): 113.

67. Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Jan. 1891): 172.

68. *Ibid.*, 174.

69. Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Feb. 1891): 210.

70. Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Sept. 1891): 539. Jill Mulvey Derr explains that the plural marriage ceremony "often included the first wife in a significant way." (Derr, "Strength in Our Union," 168.)

71. Richards, "Lights and Shades," YWJ 2 (Dec. 1890): 116.

son died a few months later, but Gwen received comfort as she reflected on this vision.⁷² Doctrines which taught that individual women, not just male leaders, received revelation from God and that women would be reunited in the next life with their children who died had an obvious appeal for women.

Susa Young Gates' serial, "Seven Times," also defended polygamy, discussed Mormon beliefs, and upheld visions of female independence. In Gates' story, the "Professor" approached Clara with a marriage offer. He explained that his first wife was "quite willing that I should take this step."⁷³ Clara "felt a sort of longing to be near his wife. . . she simply wanted to be near the Professor's wife, almost more than she cared to be near him."⁷⁴ Clara, however, went against her own better judgment, listened to her father who advised she "put him off," unwisely married a handsome yet irresponsible young man, and consequently found her married life a "disappointment."⁷⁵ Not only did Gates affirm polygamy but she also suggested that marriage was not always fulfilling. This was a lesson Gates knew from personal experience since her own first marriage, which she described as "a most unfortunate one," had ended in divorce.⁷⁶

Gates used Clara's father, Marcus Jones, as an example of those who misunderstood and abused the practice of polygamy. Jones taught his family "that a proposition from a good man who was married, and had proved his virtue and integrity was worthy of a girl's most sincere consideration."⁷⁷ He did this, however, with "the personal application in mind" (supporting plural marriage as long as it was *he* that got another wife.)⁷⁸ Gates countered Clara's weak and corrupt father with the virtuous and strong personality of an old maid, Aunt Ellen, who condemned Jones and admonished Clara to stand firm in her values.

Another forceful female character in Gates' story was Margery, a non-member who moved from Scotland to be with her Mormon uncle and stubbornly refused to accept the LDS faith. She also refused to admit her love to Don, an honorable young Mormon. She could not "be had for any man's asking."⁷⁹ Don loved Margery as well, but after Ellen coun-

72. Mormons believed they could receive personal revelations from God and that children who died before reaching eight died in innocence.

73. Homespun [Susa Young Gates], "Seven Times," YWJ 4 (Dec. 1893): 118.

74. Ibid., 119. Jill Mulvey Derr asserts that "the Mormon practice of plural marriage ideologically sanctified" social relationships between women. (Derr, "Strength in Our Union," 168).

75. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (Jan. 1894): 185, 465.

76. Caldwell, "Susa Young Gates," 38.

77. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (Jan. 1894): 184.

78. Ibid.

79. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (March 1894): 338.

seled that "the love of a man to woman and woman to man, is not the pivot around which all eternity turns," he determined "not to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage" by marrying a non-Mormon.⁸⁰ When Margery overheard Don's attitude, she plotted revenge by feigning interest in his Faith. Convinced of her sincerity, Don asked her to be with him "forever and ever," to which she "proudly and coldly" replied: "Ye'd best seek to your own poor, crazy Mormons for a wife. For I'm never sic' a fool as to sell my womanhood for a mess o' pottage like that."⁸¹ Margery, of course, eventually converted, but only after her nephew almost died and her uncle rebuked an evil spirit from her.

"Seven Times" taught young Mormon women to act independently, to respect polygamy as a principle, even if it was abused in practice, to recognize their religion as a noble inheritance too valuable to compromise, and *not* to base all their aspirations on marriage. Gates also preached specific gospel principles in her story. In Clara's deathbed scene her (unworthy) husband could not understand her attempts to communicate. The Professor (the would-be polygamist whom Clara had refused), however, understood. "'Eternity, love, and mother.' These were her parting messages to him; and he knew that some time in the great Beyond he should meet and have joy with the soul who had so repented her rash conduct."⁸² In the next life, Clara and the Professor would be together and raise a family. Because of repentance, the mistakes she had made in this life would not impede her eternal growth and happiness.⁸³

From 1889 to 1896, Mormon women writers defended polygamy, created images of independent womanhood and explored religious doctrines in their fiction for the YWJ. These themes reflected the issues that were most important to LDS women at that time. As Utah moved toward and finally gained statehood, however, Mormons tried to make themselves more acceptable to the rest of the nation. Fiction in the YWJ after 1896 reflected the main-streaming of LDS culture.

THE "NEW WOMAN IN FICTION"

In January 1896 Utah became a state. Once politically connected to the United States, Utahans became increasingly culturally connected as

80. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (Feb. 1894): 242, (March 1894): 338. Gates, as was common, used the biblical image of Esau trading his birthright to his younger brother Jacob to represent the idea of marrying outside the church.

81. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (May 1894): 369.

82. Gates, "Seven Times," YWJ 5 (July 1894): 468.

83. This scene explored (rather liberally) Mormon beliefs about the resurrection and eternal progression. Given Gates' first experience with marriage, this scene seems especially significant.

well. Mormons struggled to put their aberrant past behind them. Isolationism had failed, and emphasizing the differences between themselves and the rest of the nation had hurt the LDS cause. Polygamy, they argued, was a "past issue," and while it appeared as a major theme in their stories prior to 1896, Mormon women fiction writers only rarely broached the topic after Utah became a state.⁸⁴ Their stories also became less overtly about Mormon characters and specific Mormon teachings, and more about ordinary moral people striving for happiness.⁸⁵ Mormon women fiction writers did, however, continue to voice their thoughts on women's equality and autonomy. In fact, after 1896, women's issues became the overwhelming focus of YWJ fiction.

Some scholars have argued that after polygamy was rescinded and Utah admitted as a woman's suffrage state, Mormon women lost their incentive to work for women's rights. They moved away from a "visible and aggressive political activism" toward an emphasis on women's domestic role.⁸⁶ While Mormons did try to "transform and improve their relations with the larger American society," this did not keep LDS women from advancing feminist ideas. By this time the women's movement, which was always mainstream in Utah, was becoming mainstream in the rest of the country. After gaining political equality, Mormon women, unsurprisingly, concentrated on less visible (at least to men) areas of women's interests. Historians have argued that after women won suffrage on the national level, the women's movement lost its cohesiveness. This did not mean, however, that women were less active in advancing women's issues. With the ratification of the 19th Amendment, women, who were once united in pursuit of a single cause, separated into diverse, sometimes competing organizations.⁸⁷ Mormon women followed a similar pattern, but their shift in focus came much earlier—when Utah women secured the right to vote in 1896.

Evidence of women's activism after 1896 is not difficult to find in the YWJ, as it continued to support the women's rights movement by reporting on progress toward women's suffrage in other states, giving detailed

84. For example, out of 70 stories (counting serials with numerous episodes as one story) that appeared in the YWJ between 1898 and 1910, only 1 discussed polygamy. Almost all of the stories from the earlier period defended polygamy.

85. "The Recent Triennial in Washington," YWJ 10 (May, 1899): 207. Of 70 stories, only 5 (none serials) were *fundamentally* Mormon. This does not mean, however, that the authors did not talk about Utah or some aspect of Mormonism (although some did not). Susa Young Gates was one who continued to write "Mormon" stories.

86. See Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity," 3-21; Quote from Van Wagenen, "In Their Own Behalf," 32.

87. See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).

accounts of national women's rights meetings, publishing letters from, and information about women like Susan B. Anthony, and featuring articles that promoted equal pay and educational opportunities for women. It also featured articles, poems, and stories that encouraged young women to take advantage of, and even demand, equality.⁸⁸ A 1902 article entitled "Some Things Our Girls Should Know," asserted that "the woman who lives by the light of the Gospel of Christ, sees herself, as she is, the equal. . . of her father, her husband and her son."⁸⁹ In 1899 Susa Young Gates encouraged readers to listen to "the message of woman to woman" and to "heed" the call of women who "dare" to bring forth "sweet liberty and independence."⁹⁰ LDS women wanted their younger counterparts to recognize their "divine inheritance of perfect equality with man"—an equality that went beyond political rights—and they continued to use fiction as a means for promoting feminist ideas.⁹¹ A 1900 article in the *YWJ* acknowledged the appearance of the "New Woman" in fiction, and its author asserted that "we cannot pass her lightly for she was destined to change the ideas of man towards woman and give more strength and confidence in herself."⁹²

Perhaps because Mormon women's fiction often supported marriage and domesticity, scholars have missed the ways that it encouraged young LDS girls to understand their possibilities, gain confidence in themselves, and change their ideas about male-female relations. Even stories that ended "happily-ever-after" with husband or child, could, and did, challenge traditional gender ideas and present other options for women. A close look at this literature reveals a connection between Mormon women's fiction and women's activism during a time that has too often been dismissed as "the doldrums" for both LDS women and women nationally.⁹³

Between 1896 and 1910, LDS women writers encouraged women to participate in all types of endeavors. An 1898 editorial insisted that "everywhere women are awakening from the long sleep of tradition and are determined to work. . . with intelligence and apply mental progres-

88. After their 1896 victory, Utah women considered themselves on the vanguard of women's rights and many *YWJ* writings took an authoritarian position on the subject.

89. "Some Things Our Girls Should Know," *YWJ* 13 (March, 1902): 286-87.

90. Susa Young Gates, "With the Editor," *YWJ* 10 (May, 1899): 240.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Annie Pike, "The Influence of Fiction On Education," *YWJ* 11 (Nov. 1900): 492.

93. See Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959); and Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity," 3-21. *YWJ* fiction supports Maureen Ursenbach Beecher's contention that Mormon women "interpreted the doctrines and set the behavioral standards for their sisters. . . discovered worthy causes and organized effective social programs. . . made alliances and identified enemies." See Beecher, "The Leading Sisters," 27.

sion to the solving of the old worn monotony of a woman's sphere."⁹⁴ Mormon women had secured laws that upheld woman's rights. A Utah woman could "engage in business in her own name," keep her earnings, wages, and savings as a "separate estate without any express gift or contract of the husband, . . . loan and invest them in her own name, . . . and. . . make contracts, sue and be sued in her own name."⁹⁵ Women could legally enter any profession or occupation (except mine work), and all of Utah's institutions of higher learning were open to both sexes. They could also vote and hold office.⁹⁶ In Utah's first state elections, women were elected to the state Senate, House, and a number of city and country positions—including Ellen Jakeman as treasurer of Utah County.⁹⁷ YWJ fiction encouraged women to take advantage of the rights that Utah women had won. It taught them to view themselves as capable and responsible, and not to limit their activities to domestic endeavors.

Lillian Stewart Horsley's 1898 story, "The Duewell Household," featured Dorothy and Jerome. Not wanting her to worry, Jerome kept his business failures from his wife. But as it turned out, Dorothy showed "the greater courage of the two" and was "disappointed" in *him* for his lack of confidence.⁹⁸ As they discussed plans for the future Jerome admired the "sound logic of her reasoning," and proclaimed, "I had no idea you were such a wise little business woman."⁹⁹ Even after this episode, however, Jerome still had trouble learning that "they were one, and that he was not always that one."¹⁰⁰ But as he watched Dorothy wisely stretch their meager resources to make their own life comfortable and take care of less fortunate neighbors, he finally got the message. After that he came to her with a perplexing expense question which she quickly resolved.

In Josephine Spencer's¹⁰¹ 1903 serial, "Love that Avails," Ruth's parents' death left her responsible for the well-being of her younger siblings. As "a brave little woman, intelligent, refined and strong" who refused to be defined as a "plaything and object of pity," Ruth let go "from her life every prop to which she had held with feminine, clinging," and managed the family's affairs with skill and determination.¹⁰² After

94. "With The Editor," YWJ 9 (April 1898): 190.

95. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joselyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper, eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage* 4 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881-1922), 951.

96. *Ibid.*, 956.

97. *Ibid.*, 953.

98. Lillian Stewart Horsley, "The Duewell Household," YWJ 9 (Jan. 1898): 21-22.

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*, 23.

101. On Josephine Spencer see Kylie Neilson Turley, "The Life and Literature of Josephine Spencer" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1995); Rebecca de Schweinitz, "Josephine Spencer, Mormon Writer, Woman Writer" (MS in author's file).

102. Josephine Spencer, "Love That Avails," YWJ 14 (March 1903): 119-20, (April 1903): 166.

turning down less respectful suitors, she eventually married a man who treated her as an equal. Spencer presented Ruth's husband as the ideal mate—one who encouraged his wife and opened "new vistas to [her] mental vision."¹⁰³

YWJ writers wanted women to take advantage of the "new doors of thought, of progress, and of development for women everywhere."¹⁰⁴ They wished "every woman to wake up from the dull routine of unthinking labor. . . and to think. . . wisely and to a purpose."¹⁰⁵ When Luella, in Mary Kelly's 1901 serial, "Luella's Repentance," lost her job as a book-keeper, she found the "enforced idleness. . . torture."¹⁰⁶ An 1899 article praised George Eliot, "who dared defy conventionality and do what she thought right," and Emily Calhoun Clowes' 1907 serial, "The Boarding House Lady," likewise celebrated a woman, "free as the winter-wind of any form of conventionality."¹⁰⁷ YWJ articles honored women like Susan B. Anthony, as "heroines," "Eves" who "pioneered the way" so that those of the "second generation. . . might be able to come into our divine inheritance of perfect equality with man."¹⁰⁸ YWJ fiction presented characters who followed the example of these women—characters who took advantage of the new possibilities for women and rejected the idea of female subordination.

An 1899 story by Christine D. Young entitled "Inner Resources," opened to a scene that seemed to contain "the conditions of happiness:" shelves of books, musical instruments, orchards and fields.¹⁰⁹ Yet the "three girls that were the favored possessor of all this were evidently not happy."¹¹⁰ They complained of boredom and talked in disgust about a party their friend Carrie had recently hosted. This party was a "confidential evening," that involved "talking about our plans, and dreams, and such nonsense. . . . Of course chocolate. . . was included," but "never a boy; not the faintest shadow of one."¹¹¹ Just as the listless girls declared that "there is simply nothing interesting around this old place, it is intolerable," the scene was transformed by the appearance of two gentlemen.¹¹²

103. Ibid, 170.

104. "With The Editor," YWJ 9 (July 1898): 334.

105. Ibid., 335.

106. Mary F. Kelly, "Luella's Repentance," YWJ 12 (March 1901): 118.

107. Alice Louise Reynolds, "George Eliot's Religious Life," YWJ 10 (March 1899): 108; Emily Calhoun Clowes, "The Boarding House Lady," YWJ 18 (June 1907): 254.

108. "With the Editor," YWJ 10 (May 1890): 239.

109. Christine D. Young, "Inner Resources," YWJ 10 (June 1899): 251.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid., 252.

112. Ibid.

Young contrasted this picture with a look at Carrie, who was home by herself for the afternoon. *Her* day, however, was not spent in idle complaint. She walked around the budding trees and made a sketch, then settled down to read—a book by one of “those authors that spoke to her deeper self. . . and made her feel better and stronger and nearer to the fountain of her soul.”¹¹³ Carrie was playing the piano and singing when her mother returned. She did not need men; she had her own dreams and plans.

Josephine Spencer’s 1909 story, “The Worth Whiles,” made the same point. At first enchanted with parties, theaters, and boys, Ellice soon joined a nursing class and found the work exhilarating. It forced her to “stand on her own resources.”¹¹⁴ YWJ writers wanted women to realize they had abilities and opportunities for success that had nothing to do with men. Some YWJ fiction left out male characters altogether. Another of Spencer’s stories, for example, centered on a poor girl who lived with two older women. The girl grew some chrysanthemums, discovered she was a “‘borned’ artist,” and made a career of her talent for arranging flowers.¹¹⁵

YWJ stories challenged the limits of women’s traditional sphere, and the idea of female dependence. They asserted that women had every right to determine their own direction in life—even when that direction conflicted with the desires of their fathers, boyfriends, or husbands. In her 1907 story, “Requital,” Kate Thomas¹¹⁶ presented Hannah Davis, an unmarried woman who rescued a baby. Its mother died and Hannah wanted to care for it. Her ornery father, however, would not hear of it. Who would care for *him*? Hannah, long “too tame,” finally had her “say out for once.”¹¹⁷ She reproached her father for his ungrateful selfishness and declared that women should never put men above themselves. By the time Hannah finished her lecture, her father was “whimpering.”

Other YWJ stories featured spirited characters unafraid of challenging the men in their lives. Inid, in Josephine Spencer’s 1899 short serial, “Cross Lines,” was sarcastic and strong willed.¹¹⁸ A “kittenish” looking woman in Annie Pike’s 1903 “A College Priscilla,” “outwitted” a group of fraternity boys, and Kate Thomas described the “bantering relationship”

113. *Ibid.*, 253.

114. Josephine Spencer, “The Worth Whiles,” YWJ 20 (April 1909): 168.

115. Josephine Spencer, “A Corner in Chrysanthemums,” YWJ 13 (April 1902): 159.

116. See the Kate Thomas Collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

117. Kate Thomas, “Requital,” YWJ 18 (Dec. 1907): 533, 536.

118. Josephine Spencer, “Cross Lines,” YWJ 10 (Aug. 1899): 348-354, (Sept. 1899): 395-399.

of a young couple in her 1903 story, "The Reconciliation of Dick and Dorothy."¹¹⁹

These stories, however, often presented an ambiguous message. Thomas' story, for example, ended with an engagement scene. Dorothy, her main character, initially refused to take any suitor seriously. When Dick, Thomas' narrator, vowed to *make* her love him, she "indifferently" replied: "I value your friendship, but I cannot let you rule me."¹²⁰ Dick indeed won her love, but Dorothy continued to resist him. When "she heard the tone of mastery in his voice; she saw the mad exultation in his eyes. He had trapped her! . . . His was the victory; hers the humiliation! A great wave of uncontrollable fury swept over her. She lifted her hand and struck him on his smiling mouth!"¹²¹ After this episode Dorothy moved to California, but the two were unexpectedly reunited and immediately began their bantering. Dorothy wanted to apologize but was "determined that he should relent." She tried to make herself cry—"Woman's best weapon for all time was tears"—but only started laughing when she realized "the ridiculousness of it."¹²² Dick softened. He loved her but worried that unless he "broke" her, her "will" would overpower her affections for him.¹²³ He made her promise to marry him, insisting that she was "not capable of governing" herself.¹²⁴

Edyth Ellerbeck's¹²⁵ 1903 story, "The Roses of Destiny" featured Kate, who, as her club's newly elected president, became absorbed in speech writing and other club duties. Ellerbeck's male narrator was Kate's boyfriend. He felt neglected and declared that he "disliked speech-making women—preferred to see them doing embroidery."¹²⁶ Kate's eyes flashed at this, and she replied, "if that is what you choose a wife for, I fear you have made a mistake in honoring me."¹²⁷ The narrator pretended indifference but, hopelessly in love, came crawling back. Kate forgave him and claimed she would learn how to embroider. He begged her not to (he hated embroidery) and insisted she "keep on making speeches—but make most of them to me!"¹²⁸

119. Annie Pike, "A College Priscilla," *YWJ* 14 (March 1903): 112-114; Kate Thomas, "The Reconciliation of Dick and Dorothy," *YWJ* 14 (Dec. 1903): 548-553.

120. Thomas, 549.

121. *Ibid.*, 550.

122. *Ibid.*, 552-3.

123. *Ibid.*, 553.

124. *Ibid.*

125. Ellerbeck was the first wife of polygamist Charles Read and a member of the Utah State Legislature.

126. Edyth Ellerbeck, "The Roses of Destiny," *YWJ* 14 (Nov. 1903): 498.

127. *Ibid.*

128. *Ibid.*, 501.

Both Thomas's and Ellerbeck's stories featured strong-willed, independent women who challenged traditional female roles. Both ended with their female characters' surrender—to males and marriage. These capitulations, however, were not unequivocal. In both cases the female author spoke through a male narrator, and that narrator was given a number of traditionally female characteristics. Kate's boyfriend became strained under pressure, and felt himself "flushing like a girl," and Dick was more emotional than Dorothy, who proved utterly incapable of falling back on traditional female escape routes like crying.¹²⁹ Additionally, each story portrayed men as the victims of love, and in Thomas's story, Dorothy, even to the very end, had a hard time taking anything seriously.¹³⁰

As these stories illustrate, Mormon women writers confronted a deeper struggle than the one between the sexes. They also struggled with competing visions of themselves. The women's movement they supported challenged traditional relationships between men and women, broadened "the range of choice offered to a girl," and gave her an "intense longing for the same freedom of action that her brothers have."¹³¹ This "longing" was what one 1897 YWJ article described as "the distinguishing characteristic of the new woman."¹³² It was also a source of conflict for Mormon women. LDS women struggled to reconcile their longings for freedom of action with a national culture which exalted motherhood, and with a religion whose first prophet supposedly ushered in the women's movement but at the same time stressed families and sanctified woman's traditional role.

When Utah became a state, LDS leaders adopted the country's Victorian model of motherhood and began to emphasize women's place in the home.¹³³ Mormons had always honored motherhood, but before the LDS church began assimilating into mainstream American culture, they had also emphasized women's roles outside the home. As they moved into the twentieth century, Mormon women found their church less willing to promote options outside the home for them. LDS women fiction writers were committed to Mormonism and to the instruction of their leaders. As scholars have previously noted, their stories conceded that a mother was the "divinest thing known on earth."¹³⁴ These women writers artic-

129. Ibid.

130. Ibid.

131. "Ethical Studies: Fame vs. Home," YWJ 20 (Sept. 1908): 544; YWJ 8 (1897): 280.

132. YWJ 8 (1897): 281.

133. See Derr, "Strength in Our Union"; Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Cultural and Historical Perspective*, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 64-77.

134. Christine D. Young. "In Larger Perspective," 10 YWJ (Dec. 1899): 563-567; (Nov. 1899): 507-513.

ulated, however, the difficulties they, and other Mormon women, faced in denying themselves opportunities to pursue less traditional roles—roles they had fought for and celebrated. They wanted to fulfill the church's ideal but could not deny that they "hungered for more."¹³⁵ Mormon women fiction writers taught their younger counterparts about the range of women's possibilities. But they also taught them that those possibilities were often a source of conflict for women who recognized their individual potential *and* belonged to a religious community that idealized domestic motherhood.

YWJ editorials generally defined the "longing" women experienced as worldly ambition. They warned young Mormon women about the dangers of seeking fame over home. A 1908 article explained:

The idea now among the young people, it seems to me, is to draw away from home. The thought of home-making and devotion to home seems to be farther from their minds than ever before. . . . I do not want to discourage any improvement along any line, but it should not be to the disadvantage of the home. The home must be the center and foundation of all.¹³⁶

Mormon girls were encouraged to "get all the education possible and all the culture," told they needed "other interests, other sympathies to round out [their] character," and counseled to "grasp the idea of their possibilities," while at the same time advised that "there can be no higher ambition for a girl than to do well her part in the home."¹³⁷ Such directives were likely to cause what social scientists would later identify as "role strain"—the tension "felt by educated women, reared to be wives and mothers but educated to be independent thinkers."¹³⁸ YWJ fiction reveals the tension Mormon women felt between their longings for freedom from traditional roles and their belief that home and family represented a woman's ideal. Their stories upheld the model of wife and motherhood, but they also illustrated women's alternatives, as well as the difficulties LDS women faced in having to choose the ideal over those alternatives.

In Minnie Moore Brown's 1901 story, "Her Life-Work," the main character, Madge, asked a question: "Mamma, what can I do to be useful in this world—really and truly useful, I mean?"¹³⁹ Madge's mother told her she could set the table, but then seriously replied: "Don't you know

135. Ibid.

136. Augusta W. Grant, "The Ideal Home," YWJ 19 (August 1908): 380.

137. Ibid., 381.

138. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1982), 144.

139. Minnie Moore Brown, "Her Life Work," YWJ 12 (Oct. 1901): 459.

that every day at home you are doing more good things for us than we can count?"¹⁴⁰ This failed to satisfy Madge—she meant outside the home. As Madge grew up she kept asking the same question. She started teaching a kindergarten class but still "could not suppress a growing want at her heart—a feeling of emptiness and vague longing which grew every hour."¹⁴¹ Then came Allen Stuart, who won her heart. "[V]ery happy now," Madge "almost forgot the little aching void."¹⁴² After they married, Madge became busy with her new responsibilities, but then the "old ache" returned. She again approached her mother, wondering if there was something wrong with her. Her mother just told her to "wait awhile and maybe that want will be completely filled."¹⁴³ Sure enough, the last scene of the story showed Madge with baby in arms exclaiming: "I have found it at last. . . .What I have longed for all the time was the blessedness of motherhood."¹⁴⁴

In Josephine Spencer's 1908 story, "The 'New' Woman," Janet lived according to the motto the "greatest good to the greatest number."¹⁴⁵ "[P]resident of a half dozen prominent clubs now, and past president of as many more [and]. . .[n]o woman in town had had the number of public honors accorded her."¹⁴⁶ Janet's current project was an Orphans' Refuge. Janet herself had no children—who would keep her from doing good to the greatest number. A tiny orphan, "pining away for mother love," however, changed her outlook. As Janet held the "pitiful" infant, she felt "all the mother feeling, long dormant, starved, suppressed, surging in her heart."¹⁴⁷ When she brought the baby home, her husband was overjoyed (he evidently had experienced something of the "mother-feeling" for some time), and found that it turned her into a "new woman. . .the old-fashioned kind."¹⁴⁸

Kate Thomas also wrote of longings in her 1901 story, "The Gobbles and Others, Principally Others." In Thomas's story Minnie wanted to cancel her wedding and pursue other options. When her fiancé, Brig, protested, she complained that men "don't understand." She exclaimed:

I hate this place! I can't breathe here! I'm stagnating. . . .I used to think I'd run away, but I was too much of a coward. Then you came. It all changed. . . . But it didn't last. . . .The old longings came back. I tried to kill them, indeed

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid., 461.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid., 462.

144. Ibid.

145. Josephine Spencer, "The 'New' Woman," *YWJ* 19 (Nov. 1908): 559.

146. Ibid.

147. Ibid., 602.

148. Ibid., 604.

I did. But they won't be still, . . . I want light and laughter and music. I want my turn at the bright things. It has always been peg away, peg away, peg away. Oh. . . you don't know how hard it is to be a girl! . . . We want freedom. . . . It is awful to be tied down and to long and long and long.¹⁴⁹

Brig tried to console her. He told her of his dreams for their life together, but Minnie replied that "[i]t sounds very lovely. But it wouldn't be that way."¹⁵⁰ She was firm in her decision to leave. Brig would not let her go easily and asked her to be "sensible"—to not "let this mad freak spoil our lives."¹⁵¹ When Minnie agreed to marry him if he insisted upon it, but warned that she would hate him, Brig finally let go. But by the end of the story Minnie was back—nothing else seemed to satisfy her.

Each of these stories, and many like them, upheld traditional roles for women. Brown and Spencer glorified motherhood, and Thomas showed that "there's nothing in all the world like love."¹⁵² These writers, however, also expressed the tension Mormon women felt in a culture that encouraged independent womanhood and sexual equality at the same time it idealized traditional dependent roles.

"IN LARGER PERSPECTIVE"¹⁵³

YWJ fiction writers presented characters who grew up "longing" to make a difference in the world, who were ambitious and aware of their possibilities. Although these characters usually relinquished the "free" and "independent life" they had achieved—the fame and financial success they found in the "world"—for marriage and motherhood, they and the Mormon women who created them did not silently acquiesce to traditional roles.¹⁵⁴ LDS women fiction writers voiced the "undefined longing for something better" that they and other Mormon women experienced as they tried to reconcile their feminists beliefs with a religion that increasingly allowed only one "true" option for women.¹⁵⁵ Susa Young

149. Kate Thomas, "The Gobbles and Others, Principally Others," YWJ 12 (Nov. 1901): 499.

150. Ibid., 500.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., 501.

153. This was the title of a previously cited story by Christine Young.

154. Lella Marler Hoggan, "The Unwritten Law," YWJ 18 (1907): 16-19.

155. Christine D. Young, 511. In an era that saw the decline of women's autonomy and authority within the Mormon church, fiction remained one of the only ways for women to express their discontent. The YWJ functioned as part of the "informal undercurrent" that "interrupted the formal [male/power] system" of the LDS church that Maureen Ursenbach Beecher discusses in "The Leading Sisters." See also Jill Mulvey Derr and Brooklyn Derr, "Outside the Mormon Hierarchy: Alternative Aspects of Institutional Power," *Dialogue* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 21-43.

Gates once described herself as "one of the most dissatisfied members of my sex."¹⁵⁶ It seems fitting that the journal she created became an outlet for Mormon women to proclaim: "how hard it is to be a girl! . . . We want freedom."¹⁵⁷

156. Quoted in the Register of the Susa Young Gates Collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2.

157. Kate Thomas, "The Gobbles and Others," 500.