simplicity, literature can be classified as literary or popular; similarly, Mormon literature has been divided into: literature of faith and belief, versus what Karl Keller once called "jack-fiction."[4] In discussing orthodox Mormon fiction that reverberates with heart-warming conclusions, Bennion writes, "My academic training makes me want to mock this kind of extended plot, but Weyland's books sell like peanuts at a circus."[5] Elaborating on the distinctions, Bennion comments that

> In popular fiction, truth is easily understood; good and evil are clearly marked. But in literary fiction, outcomes are uncertain and characters ambiguous. The reader is invited by literary fictions to judge between relative truths and to questions former truths. The focus is not on a didactic outcome but on the experience of the character, the career of their lives. (p. 8)

Bennion acknowledges that many readers, including some of his students, are not interested in fiction "that deals ambiguously with good and evil" (p. 7). Nevertheless, he argues, the value of this literature lies in requiring "moral decisions in a fictional universe that approaches the complexity and ambiguity of the universe we find ourselves in. . .[thus]. . .careful readers can still grow morally by being forced to decide in the world of the literary novel" (p. 9). Ultimately, Bennion calls for a balanced narrative diet, and that is exactly what he gives us in *Falling Toward Heaven,* a decidedly literary work about the complexity of relationships and religion. Go forth and read.

Dissent Without Definition

Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters, edited by John Sillito and Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 376 pp.

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ALL GOOD HISTORY is as much about the present as it is about the past. Sillito and Staker's volume, which includes biographical sketches of dissenters ranging widely across the 180-year history of the LDS church, is firmly grounded in the polarized present. In compiling the volume, the editors sought to find out "What. . .the lives and beliefs of these independent spirits tell us about Mormonism, ourselves, and the larger world around us" (p. x). The "independent spirits" dealt with in the volume include Amasa Lyman, John E. Page, Sarah Pratt, William Smith, T.B.H. and Fanny Stenhouse, James Strang, Moses Thatcher, Fawn Brodie, Juanita Brooks, Thomas Stewart Ferguson, Sterling McMurrin, Samuel W. Taylor, and D. Michael Quinn. Sillito and Staker at-

4. Quoted in jackweyland.com/review3, 1.
5. jackweyland.com/review3, 4.

tempt to make the case for the philosophical and theological diversity of these individuals by noting that some eventually left the church while others did not. All of them, however, sought to promote "truth in the face of falsehood" (p. x). In fact, however, the vast majority of the people profiled found themselves outside of the church. The selection process is thus not quite so open as it may appear. The editors seem to have privileged a certain type of dissenter—one for whom dissent becomes the defining element of his or her relationship with the LDS church. It might have been instructive to also include individuals for whom some degree of alienation and dissent was keenly felt, but for whom such impulses were reined in due to their ultimate belief in the metaphysical truth of Mormonism. Richard Poll, Lowell Bennion, and B.H. Roberts come to mind as examples of such dissenters.

Nevertheless, the profiles are generally engaging and occasionally brilliant. William Russell's essay on James Strang and Richard and Mary Van Wagoner's piece on Sarah Pratt are particularly good examples, but for different reasons. Russell points out the difficulty Mormons had in simply dismissing Strang as unbalanced. Because he claimed prophetic experiences nearly identical to those of Joseph Smith, Strang forced Mormons to examine more closely charges of irrationality in dealing with other expressions of faith—something that Mormons continue to struggle with today. The Van Wagoners offer a moving portrait of the long-suffering and independent Sarah Pratt. Her husband Orson's frequent church-induced absences and polygamous intrigue finally led her out of the church and her marriage, but this is a story that has been told before. What is most valuable is the timely acknowledgement that even among the elite of Mormon society, martial difficulty, divorce, and general unpleasantness were as much a part of life as they were for those, then and now, of the rank and file. Edward Leo Lyman's look at the difficulties Moses Thatcher faced serves a similar purpose. Lyman provides a compelling look inside the pre-correlation hierarchy and a taste of how strong-willed but religiously dedicated individuals fail to see eye to eye. In a day when the unanimity and brotherhood of the church's presiding quorums are celebrated (however cosmetically) within official and orthodox LDS culture, it would no doubt come as a surprise to many to learn that "President [Joseph F.] Smith felt so strongly at odds with Thatcher that at one point he refused to partake of the sacrament as long as he held such resentment" (p. 170). Loretta Hefner's look at Amasa Lyman's spiritual odyssey offers a unique glimpse into how apostles in the early period often fought over central, important doctrinal issues—disagreements which led to Lyman's excommunication, but not to that of Orson Pratt or Orson Hyde though they continued to share his views for years. All of these serve to illustrate how the current church's emphasis on historical continuity and unanimity has distorted the rich tradition of dissent, public and private, within the nineteenth-century church.

The profiles of more recent mavericks are generally somewhat less compelling. Richard Cracroft's essay on Samuel W. Taylor and Newell Bringhurst's piece on Fawn Brodie are the exceptions. Both of these provide fresh insights into the lives of individuals whose relationships with the LDS church were almost obsessive and whose identities were simply incom-