

*Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)—although that work is a history of the book’s reception instead of a literary analysis—and Richard Dilworth Rust’s *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997). Hardy covers some of the same terrain as Rust, but Hardy’s method of organizing material by narrator (as opposed to Rust’s of organizing by literary element) yields a more comprehensive reading and reveals more about the narrators’ character, while Hardy’s consideration of gaps and his reading against the grain expose insights unexplored by Rust. So while it seems rather unlikely that non-LDS readers will be able to accept Hardy’s reading, *Understanding the Book of Mormon* is a groundbreaking work in the analysis of the Book of Mormon, and the wide (LDS) audience that it deserves will be amply rewarded with stunning new insights.

## From Exotic to Normal

Brian Q. Cannon and Jessie L. Embry, eds. *Utah in the Twentieth Century*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009. ix, 412 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, index. Cloth: \$32.95. ISBN: 978-0-87421-744-5

*Reviewed by David Salmanson*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the state of Utah had been marginalized and exotic; at the 2002 Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City, however, it presented itself as central and metropolitan. Hailed as the state’s coming-out party, the Opening Ceremonies had distinctly Utahn features. The most memorable images from the games were not the sports, but the opening and closing ceremonies: a little skater, blond, of course, re-creating frontier history, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir belting out a John Williams composition as only it could. It seemed that beneath the veneer of sophistication was the aesthetic of a country cousin striving for cool but winding up a bit tacky. In that sense, Utah was never more American.

How did Utah make that journey from exotic to normal? And

how normal is Utah anyway? Perhaps most importantly for the readers of *Dialogue*, what difference did Mormons make in the state's century-long evolution? These questions drive the essays collected in *Utah in the Twentieth Century*. The authors' contributions emerged from a seminar sponsored by the Charles Redd Center in 2006, and revised for publication. (As a note of disclosure, I received a grant from the Charles Redd Center when I was a graduate student studying the history of uranium mining in New Mexico and therefore am very fond of the place.)

Like any multiple-author essay collection, the delights and disappointments here will vary widely depending as much on the reader as on the author. One of my favorites is Kristen Rogers-Iversen's "The Famous Blue Valley' and a Century of Hope." In evocative language that paints vivid images of hope and despair, Rogers-Iversen captures both the similarities and differences of Utah compared to the rest of the West. She chronicles how the varied hopes of settlers motivated by dreams of religious or economic reward were destroyed by the floods of the Fremont River or other disasters. Time and again citizens came to Blue Valley, west of Hanksville, near Capitol Reef in southern Utah. Settlers were called on LDS missions to make the desert bloom, tried to build an irrigation dam to make cheap land valuable, and attempted to prospect for uranium. It's a story repeated across the rural West, in the Dust Bowl of 1930s Kansas and Oklahoma, and in the oil shale boom and bust of 1970s Colorado.

But Rogers-Iversen also captures the pieces that make these stories both American and distinctly Utahn. When Fred Giles's betrothed died of diphtheria in 1902, "he buried his hopes along with her body." This sad story was repeated throughout the West and all of America until the 1950s, when death became the province of the old. But how many Americans, one wonders, would make sure they were sealed to their departed love in a temple ceremony as Giles did before his own death in 1950?

Ah, the Mormon question. Do Mormons make a difference in Utah's history? There are two schools of thought to this, the "heck, yeah's" and the "hell, no's." The former side's argument is more obvious, but the "hell, no's" have pointed to Utah's common trajectory with much of the Intermountain West, especially in the twentieth century. While the majority of articles here fall into the

“hell, no” camp, the “heck, yeah’s” have some of the more interesting pieces. We live in a time when the LDS Church’s role in politics is once again under discussion because of Mitt Romney’s presidential run and California’s Proposition 8.

While this collection was compiled before the 2008 election, several timely essays remind us that Utah’s present is not always so different from its past. In the 1930s, the Church’s social welfare program was lauded by conservative voices such as *Reader’s Digest* as a counter to the New Deal programs of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (and his Mormon adviser Marriner Eccles). Joseph Darowski explores this fight and finds that the Church Security Plan (subsequently renamed the Church Welfare Plan so as not to be confused with the federal Social Security program) was not particularly successful and that Mormons in Utah depended heavily on federal funds.

And with the Church at the center of a variety of controversies today such as the aforementioned California Prop 8, Jacob W. Olmstead’s look at how those opposed to the deployment of the MX missile in Utah over the course of two years (1979–81) persuaded the Mormon leadership to join them in their opposition is fascinating. Completely aside from the history it reveals, it lays out the intricacies of building a successful political movement that can speak to many different constituencies.

In those articles that focus explicitly on non-Mormon topics, the best tend to cover more recent history. Both Adam Eastman’s article on water management and Jedediah Rogers’s article on the Sagebrush Rebellion put national and regional issues in a Utah context. In these pieces, Utah seems not so different from Colorado or New Mexico or California.

Like any collection of this sort, this anthology contains a few articles with more limited appeal. For those particularly interested in the history of city reform movements, Jessie L. Embry’s insightful and clear essay is an excellent primer whose central lesson appears to be that the form of government is less important than what government actually does. The audience for that essay is probably a small one, although it must dwarf the number of readers who, of their own volition, will engage John McCormick and John Sillito’s essay on the 1913 International Workers of the World (IWW) free speech fight. However, they have penned a

lovely narrative piece of an ugly time; and those unaware of the repression enforced on the union or think that rolling back the Wagner Act is a good idea should give it a look.

Several articles have a more ambiguous audience. James Adams's article on public schools provides an explanation of the so-called Utah paradox of high achievement and low per-student funding. Evidently, that paradox disappears and Utah students actually do worse than national averages when the data are controlled for race and income. But this discovery emerges only after slogging through descriptions of funding battles that only a labor lobbyist could love.

To return to the question that bedevils Utah history: Do Mormons make a difference? I'm not sure, but the twenty-first century has furthered the conundrum. The Salt Lake City Olympics may have been quintessentially American, but their image is already fading. The dominant vision of Utah (and an unexpected source of revenue) is rapidly becoming St. George's role as Albuquerque's stunt double in Disney's *High School Musical* series of movies. Why did the producers shoot in St. George? Because, as any fan of *So You Think You Can Dance* knows, the best dancers are in Utah. And why are the best dancers in Utah? Could it have anything to do with what a 1950s *Time* magazine reporter once called the "dancingest denomination"? It could be, or perhaps it's just cheaper labor costs and proximity to Los Angeles. I suppose the answer depends on whether you lean toward the "hell, no's" or the "heck, yeah's." After reading this volume, I'm still with the latter camp.

## Navigating Mortality

Angela Hallstrom, ed. *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction*. Introduction by Margaret Blair Young. Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2010. 458 pp. Paperback: \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-9843603-0-7

*Reviewed by Myrna Dee Marler*

The cover of *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction* shows clocks on long poles dipped into a blue lake surrounded by mountains. At first