

our sample is representative, in the diminished authority of the first person for elite writers. An analogous trajectory in American literature might be drawn between, say, J. D. Salinger and David Foster Wallace: each an iconic elite artist of his time, the first leveraging the prestige of the outsider first-person, both in his most famous novel and in his reclusive persona, and the latter ruthlessly destabilizing every formal and philosophical assumption beneath the authorial “I.”

Does Doucet in fact represent a larger flight in Mormon letters away from the affirmative first person, a reaction to the ubiquity of the first person in mainstream culture? On this question it is the critic’s privilege to demur. If she does indeed represent the vanguard of such a flight, I cannot resist a bit of advice for our Mormon literary artists: if the “I, eye, and aye” of Bradford’s confident, critical, and ultimately affirmative first-person singular is to be abandoned or attenuated, find a new narrative vehicle from within the rich cultural resources of our own history and tradition. A fine example of this kind of culturally-specific narrative experimentation is Steven Peck’s 2011 novel *The Scholar of Moab*. (Coincidentally, Peck’s second novel, *A Short Stay in Hell*, was published by Doucet’s imprint, Strange Violin, in 2012.) Peck’s *Scholar* draws on Mormon diary culture, southern Utah regionalism, and our conflicted traditions of individualism and collectivism to create a wonderfully strange, deeply philosophical narrative that interrogates the nature of the first person. My own vote for a fresh narrative vehicle in Mormon letters is the first-person plural, the “we” at the center of our prayer language, our communitarian legacy, our most beloved hymns. The first-person plural would provide the artist with a medium for formal experimentation while retaining a connection to native Mormon culture. There’s more to be discovered about faith and doubt than that lonely first-person singular can accomplish on its own.

The Cultural Contexts of Mormonism

Kim Östman, *The Introduction of Mormonism to Finnish Society*,

1840–1900. (Åbo Akademi University Press, 2010). 486pp. € 32
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Reviewed by Mark Kilmer

I moved from the United States to Finland a decade ago, and in the midst of a good deal of culture shock, I found comfort in what I perceived as the uniformity of Mormonism. I sat in my new ward for the first Sunday and thought what so many Mormons abroad have thought before and since: Mormonism seems so familiar in its liturgy (or lack thereof) and its general expectations. Over time, as I participated in the ward more and got to know members better, I discovered subtle differences in the Mormon experience here, and likewise in the years I lived in London; nothing of the magnitude of the often-feared candles on the sacrament table, but more in the emphasis or lack of emphasis put on certain doctrines and the tone of conversations and lessons. Mormonism as a correlated, hierarchical system is fairly uniform, but the cultural context in which Mormonism exists creates subtle differences. However, those differences in the Mormon experience based on context rarely receive serious examination.

Kim Östman's *The Introduction of Mormonism to Finnish Society, 1840–1900*, is a historical examination of the interaction of a specific cultural context and Mormonism, which itself developed out of a social and political context significantly different from Finland's, especially in regard to the role of religion in society. Östman focuses on an obscure moment in the history of both Finnish religious life and Mormon missionary efforts. During the years of his study, Finland boasted seventy-seven converts, nearly all of them belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority. Fourteen of them emigrated to Utah and twenty-eight were excommunicated. The Mormon presence in Finland remained negligible between 1900 and 1946, when a sustained missionary presence began. Thus in many ways this story is that of a dead end for Mormonism, a look at a half-hearted effort to establish the church in a culture that did not welcome it.

It is this interaction between Finnish culture and Mormonism in which Östman is principally interested. Why was the success of the church in Finland so limited compared to other Nordic coun-

tries, especially Denmark and Sweden.² After laying out his theoretical background, Östman begins with a review of Mormon history and doctrine through the nineteenth century, including the especially relevant topics of the rise and fall of plural marriage and the Utah War. He gives special attention to Mormon perceptions of other Christians, boundary maintenance, and the structure of early missionary work generally and in Scandinavia specifically. He then examines the religious culture of Finland in the late nineteenth century, especially the role of the state-sponsored churches and the presence of other religions during the period. (Finland was at that time in the process of transitioning from a strictly monoreligious, Lutheran society to one where various religions were allowed to exist but not to proselytize; this shift is related to and in some ways a result of Finland becoming a largely autonomous part of the Russian empire.)

In many ways, the core of the book is a comprehensive examination of how Mormons were portrayed in print, both in domestic newspapers and periodicals and imported, translated novels and travel narratives. These sources range from the journalistic to the sensational, and Östman ties the frequency and content of these texts to developments of Mormonism, which have clearly not gone unnoticed. He then traces the specific activities of Mormon missionaries sent from Sweden and the Finnish reaction to them, including a fascinating case study centered around the town of Pohja in southern Finland, in which a member from Sweden was sent as a missionary, converted a few of his neighbors, and was prosecuted and jailed for doing so.

Two aspects of Östman's work make it significant. First, the examination of cultural context as a means of understanding how Mormonism takes shape in a specific location is important research. My general sense is that this type of research has been growing, but centers largely around the foundational moments of the church rather than the diversification of Mormon experience, which is institutionally more tolerated than celebrated. More of this type of research would be valuable for Mormon studies, including contemporary studies as well as the historical work. In the long run, it might even encourage more local autonomy in global Mormonism.

Just as significant is the existence of a study of Finnish Mor-

monism researched and published by a Finnish Mormon reflecting an understanding of both cultures. Östman grew up as a Finnish Mormon, served as a missionary in Great Britain, and is fluent in Finnish, Swedish and English, the languages of his research. He is also a founding member of the European Mormon Studies Association, which holds an annual conference and publishes *The International Journal of Mormon Studies*. As Mormonism increases in its global reach, Mormon studies as a field could better represent that growth through more local organizations for Mormon studies like EMSA and more activity by local scholars around the world. However, Mormon studies research requires a visit to the LDS church archives because of the centralization of historical documents early in the twentieth century. That centralization was significant in preserving historical data, but it has probably limited the ability for local historians to operate without a trip to Salt Lake City or a proxy there to assist him or her.

Even though Östman's study focuses on a remote moment in Mormonism, I found it relevant to my current Mormon experience in Finland. Several years ago, I went to Helsinki's largest bookstore and, inspired by a blog post, decided to see what books they had about Mormonism. The religions section had no books in any languages that featured Mormonism, and so I asked a salesperson. After consulting her computer, she guided me to the American shelf of the geography section, where I found Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven* and *Escape* by Carolyn Jessop. That was it. I recalled that incident while reading *The Introduction of Mormonism to Finnish Society, 1840–1900*, and it struck me that surprisingly little has changed.

To the Edges of Modern Life

Hugh J. Cannon. *To the Peripheries of Mormondom*, edited by Reid Neilson. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011. 336 pp. Cloth: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1607810100

Reviewed by Erica Eastley

On December 4, 1920, apostles David O. McKay and Hugh J. Can-