

DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought is published quarterly by the University of Illinois Press for the Dialogue Foundation. *Dialogue* has no official connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contents copyrighted by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Print ISSN 0012-2157; electronic ISSN 1554-9399. *Dialogue* is available in full text in electronic form at www.dialoguejournal.com and JSTOR.org and is archived by the University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections, available online at www.lib.utah.edu/portal/site/marriottlibrary. *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, www.umi.com.

Dialogue welcomes articles, essays, poetry, notes, fiction, letters to the editor, and art. Submissions should follow the current Chicago Manual of Style, using footnotes for all citations. All submissions should be in Word and may be submitted electronically at <https://dialoguejournal.com/submissions/>. For submissions of visual art, please contact art@dialoguejournal.com.

Submissions published in the journal, including letters to the editor, are covered by our publications policy, <https://dialoguejournal.com/submissions/publication-policy/>, under which the author retains the copyright of the work and grants *Dialogue* permission to publish. See www.dialoguejournal.com.

EDITORS EMERITI

Eugene England and G. Wesley Johnson

Robert A. Rees

Mary Lythgoe Bradford

Linda King Newell and L. Jackson Newell

F. Ross Peterson and Mary Kay Peterson

Martha Sonntag Bradley and Allen D. Roberts

Neal Chandler and Rebecca Worthen Chandler

Karen Marguerite Moloney

Levi S. Peterson

Kristine Haglund

Boyd J. Petersen

CONTENTS

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Mormon Women Claiming Power	<i>Margaret Olsen Hemming</i>	1
-----------------------------	-------------------------------	---

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

Multiculturalism as Resistance: Latina Migrants Navigate U.S. Mormon Spaces	<i>Brittany Romanello</i>	5
The Other Crime: Abortion and Contraception in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Utah	<i>Amanda Hendrix-Komoto</i>	33
Women's Lived Experience as Authority: Antenarratives and Interactional Power as Tools for Engagement	<i>Emily January Peterson</i>	47

PERSONAL VOICES

The Blessing I Took	<i>Lindsay Denton</i>	75
The Power of an Unbroken Woman	<i>Joy Sitawa Richards</i>	83
The Stories We Tell—And What They Tell Us	<i>Heather Sundahl</i>	89
The Order of Eve: A Matriarchal Priesthood	<i>Kyra N. Krakos</i>	99
“For the Power is In Them”: Leonard Arrington and the Founders of <i>Exponent II</i>	<i>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich</i>	107
Women in <i>Dialogue</i>	<i>Claudia Bushman</i>	121

INTERVIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS

Mormon Women in the Ministry	<i>Emily Clyde Curtis</i>	129
Women in Workplace Power	<i>Barbara Christiansen</i>	143

POETRY

A Found Poem	<i>Marilyn Bushman-Carlton</i>	153
Reason Stares	<i>Emily Harris Adams</i>	155
Mother's Blessing	<i>Mette Ivie Harrison</i>	157

On Women and Priesthood Power	Carol Lynn Pearson	158
Willing the Storm	Holly Welker	159
Self Portrait in Which I Fail to Hide My Daddy Issues From Google	Allie Spikes	161
Explaining God the Mother to My Father	Terresa Wellborn	165
Issue of Blood	Twila Newey	166
Women's Blessing	Melonie Cannon	168

FICTION

The Garden of Babel	Luna Corbden	171
The Nape of the Neck	Keira Shae	184

REVIEWS

When Was the Last Time You Read a Romance Novel?	Madi Markle Moss	190
Ilima Todd. <i>A Song for the Stars</i> .		
A Rising Generation: Women in Power in Young Adult Novels	Katherine Cowley	194
Jo Cassidy. <i>Good Girls Stay Quiet</i>		
Emily King. <i>Before the Broken Star</i>		
Julie Berry. <i>Lovely War</i>		
Tipping the Scales: LDS Women and Power in Recent Scholarship	Charlotte Hansen Terry	198
Fourteen Respites	Meg Conley	203
Ashley Mae Hoiland. <i>One Hundred Birds</i>		
<i>Taught Me to Fly: The Art of Seeking God</i> .		

ART NOTE

Symbols on Canvas	Lita Little Giddins	206
-------------------	---------------------	-----

FROM THE PULPIT

The Gebirah and Female Power	Amber Richardson	219
------------------------------	------------------	-----

MORMON WOMEN CLAIMING POWER

Margaret Olsen Hemming

As the editor of *Exponent II*, I have had innumerable Mormon men—progressive and orthodox—tell me that they would like to listen to women, but women just don’t step up and talk. From President Russell M. Nelson’s 2015 plea for women to step forward and be spiritual leaders¹ to ex-Mormon Reddit forums, men ask for women to speak but decline to change the structures and traditions that have pressured women to be silent. When women do start talking, they are often met with hostility, condescension, disinterest, or closed doors. In this environment, it is hard for women to confidently claim power. It often means shrugging off insults, letting go of others’ judgments, and ignoring those who would try to interrupt. It means rewriting your own story, refusing to let anyone stand between yourself and God. It means making people uncomfortable, including, sometimes, yourself.

In this issue, guest edited by *Exponent II*, we asked women to write about claiming power. We hoped that writers would think creatively about the idea of power, including traditional forms of authority in an organizational hierarchy but also going beyond this somewhat limiting definition. We wanted women to examine their engagement of power within their families, wards, workplaces, and selves. We were interested in the way Mormon women are using their power to empower other marginalized groups.

1. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” Oct. 2015, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/10/a-plea-to-my-sisters?lang=eng>.

The response to the call for submissions for this issue was overwhelming. If I wasn't intimately familiar with the vitality of the Mormon feminist community, I would have been astonished at how much women had to say about this topic. Reading through these women's many stories of joy and frustration, heartbreak and resolve left me buoyed up and newly committed to sharing my voice without apology. This issue contains academic essays about undocumented Latina Mormons, interrelational power, and historical ads for abortion pills in Utah. We feature personal essays exploring the practice of women participating in blessings, how faith and stories can lend the power to change one's life, and the long relationship between *Exponent II* and *Dialogue*. We have also included two roundtable interviews: one with women in positions of workplace authority and the other with women who have been ordained. Lita Little Giddins writes about art by Michelle Franzoni Thorley and reflects on the experiences of Mormon women artists of color. The poetry creates a satisfying arc that explores Mormon feminist theology. The short stories in the fiction section consider vulnerability and the deliberate choice to expose oneself to risk. The book reviews examine how literature reveals power imbalances and how Mormon women are claiming power in a variety of ways to address those imbalances. Finally, we close with a sermon about Bathsheba, sexual violence, and reclaiming the divine feminine.

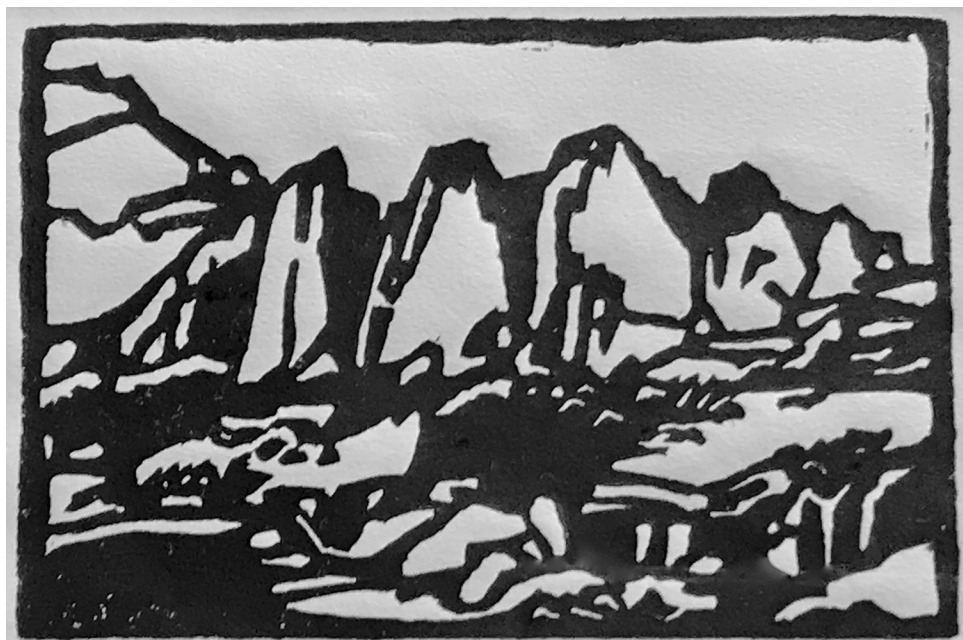
The first time *Exponent II* guest edited an issue of *Dialogue* was in 1971. At the close of her introduction to that "pink issue," Claudia Bushman wrote, "One major achievement, if we can claim any, is that ordinarily silent women have examined their lives and written about what they have seen. . . . Women have always been valued in the Church but not encouraged to say much. We hope that now and in the future more ladies will speak out and, what is more, be heard."² Only half of

2. Claudia Lauper Bushman, "Women in Dialogue: An Introduction," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (1971): 8.

Claudia's wish has been fulfilled: women are speaking, but they are not always heard.

More spaces than ever, including my favorite, *Exponent II*, now exist for Mormon women to speak unapologetically and with candor. No one can reasonably claim that Mormon women are not stepping forward to add their perspectives to the most vital conversations within our church, our faith, and our communities. Learning about women's experiences in Mormonism is not a niche specialty relevant only to other women but essential to understanding the lived history and theology of our faith tradition. If you are a current *Dialogue* subscriber, you will soon be receiving the Spring 2020 issue of *Exponent II* in your mailbox. We are excited for *Dialogue* readers who may not be familiar with our work to add *Exponent II* to their libraries by subscribing to our quarterly magazine. You can read more and subscribe at www.exponentii.org. We are all richer when women claim power through sharing their voices. May they be heard.

MARGARET OLSEN HEMMING {olsen.margaret@gmail.com} is the editor in chief of *Exponent II* and the coauthor of *The Book of Mormon for the Least of These*, a social justice exegesis of the Book of Mormon. She earned a master's degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University. Passionate about Mormon women's art, she sits on the advisory board of the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts. She lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina with her spouse, three children, and a large vegetable garden.



Linda Hoffman Kimball
Three in Zion
linoleum cut

MULTICULTURALISM AS RESISTANCE: LATINA MIGRANTS NAVIGATE US MORMON SPACES

Brittany Romanello

On a warm and breezy Sunday afternoon, Julissa¹ opens her door and gives me *saludos*, a traditional greeting kiss on the cheeks. Stepping inside, I am engulfed by the familiar smell of green plantains with cheese, yellow rice, and roasted meats. I immediately tie up my hair and get to work. I stir the rice with her young daughter on my hip while Julissa's mom chases after her older child. We fall into a comfortable rhythm as melodic as the *cumbia* music in the background. These foods and this trust placed in me to help prepare them are the result of many close years spent together, and I am touched every time I am included in this tradition. Finally, when all is ready, Julissa calls upstairs to the family: "*Come eat! Hermana Brittany is here!*" I cannot help but smile when she calls me *hermana*, her "sister." Her reference to me signifies a dual meaning: I am not only like a family member to her, but additionally, the term *hermana* is used among Spanish-speaking members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as Mormons) to signify solidarity and integration with one another. This sentiment of *el/la hermandad* (brotherhood or sisterhood) is an important practice to remind Church members that we are socially and spiritually tied to and reliant upon one another. For Latina migrants in the Church, *la hermandad* is an essential part of navigating spaces within Mormonism that are complex, predominantly white, and/or

1. All interview participants' names have been changed.

politically and historically painful as they work, worship, and parent in the United States.

Julissa is twenty-eight years old and has been my *hermana* for over a decade. She is the daughter of an Ecuadorian mother and Salvadorian father. Her father and older siblings arrived in the US as refugees from El Salvador under temporary protected status (TPS). They had traveled from Ecuador and stopped to live in Mexico before crossing the border. Because none of Julissa's older siblings were born in El Salvador, they did not qualify for temporary protected status with their father and therefore had to cross without documentation. Her mother crossed unauthorized months later with the help of Church contacts in southern California. In the early 2000s, Julissa's mother won the green card lottery: an annual, preset number of visas issued to applicants from selected countries. Through this, she was able to petition for herself and then her children's permanent residency.

On the night of my visit, Julissa agreed to go beyond her normal *hermana* role. She decided to share with me her intimate experiences growing up Mormon within an undocumented immigrant family in the predominantly white suburbs of Salt Lake City as well as her current experiences as a Latina raising bicultural children in the Church. Throughout our interview, I began to see how living in the United States has required her to develop multicultural approaches in order to navigate complicated social and religious environments. Julissa shared some ways these intersections manifested in her upbringing:

I remember my mother working odd jobs because she didn't have papers. Growing up, I would see people from school or church being taken by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Unless you live through it, it's hard to understand. Getting papers isn't like paying a parking ticket. I've always considered myself an American, but in school and on my mission people made fun of me because I wasn't American "*enough*." That would hurt me. But I'm not ashamed. I'm eternally grateful my parents made our home reflect the parts of the world they knew. I learned music, food, language, and my faith. Those are a huge part of me. I want that for my daughters now.

Julissa's experiences mirror what many other Latina Mormon mothers shared with me in anonymous interviews about living as immigrants in mixed-status or undocumented families in the United States. She is part of a large and underserved community within US Mormon spaces.

According to official statistics reported in December 2018, around 43 percent of global LDS Church membership identifies or has ties with Latin American or Latinx heritage.² Despite such a strong worldwide presence, Mormon Latinx voices are vastly underexamined in Church historical archives, Anglo-American LDS community dialogues, and scholarly research, with a few exceptions.³ I know this because as a white US citizen born into the Church, aside from the occasional faith-promoting story or *Ensign* article, I did not grow up hearing Latina or migrant voices and histories highlighted in English-speaking congregations. It has been an ongoing process for me as a Church member and academic researcher to begin to understand how these public narratives regarding members' life experiences have stayed for the most part, Anglo- and androcentric in nature. In the summer of 2018, I interviewed over twenty practicing Latina Mormon mothers living in Utah, Nevada, and southern California, all geographically considered part of the "Mormon Corridor," or areas where early Church members historically settled and colonized. I was interested in the stories and

2. "Facts and Statistics: Worldwide Statistics," *Newsroom*, Sept. 1, 2018, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics>.

3. Rebecca A. Smith and Susan E. Mannon, "'Nibbling on the Margins of Patriarchy': Latina Immigrants in Northern Utah," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 986–1005; Ignacio M. García, "Finding a Mormon Identity through Religion and Activism: A Personal Note on Constructing a Latino Time and Place in the Mormon Narrative," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 2 (2015): 69–90; Ignacio García, "Empowering Latino Saints to Transcend Historical Racialism: A Bishop's Tale," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Joanna Brooks and Gina Colvin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 1–360; Sujey Vega, "Hermanas interseccionales: Las latinas de LDS navegan por la fe, el liderazgo y la solidaridad femenina," *Latino Studies* 17, no. 1 (2019): 27–47.

experiences of these women, all of whom had lived undocumented in the United States for long periods, with about 45 percent who adjusted their legal status at some point after arrival. Some questions I explored in developing this research and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) interview guide were:

1. What is the historical role of Latinx inclusion and race relations in the LDS Church?
2. How do immigrant Latina mothers construct their sense of belonging in US Church communities?
3. How do Latina mothers choose to preserve their cultural values and traditions in their faith practice and family relationships?

It is crucial for me as both an *hermana* and researcher to highlight the voices of mothers who shared their stories with me, some doing so at risk to their personal safety or social standing within Church circles. My findings indicate that the majority of mothers often feel a strong disconnect between Church public policy and doctrine—one that encourages the protection of migrant families and cultural pluralism—and their actual lived experiences with Anglo-American family and Church members. Every woman interviewed expressed complex feelings of both belonging and marginalization, each recalling instances of discrimination within US Church spaces due to their ethnic and racial identity or legal status. These experiences heavily influenced mothers' preferences for attending pan-ethnic Latinx congregations within the created spaces of Spanish or Portuguese "wards." This is majorly in part due to the historical struggles Latinas, migrants, and women have all faced since the inception of LDS missionary work both inside and outside the US. This large and complex history expands well beyond Salt Lake City Church headquarters. Strides for racial equity and inclusion within Mormon spaces, US Church member attitudes regarding immigrant assimilation, and their individual migration experiences all influenced interviewed mothers in their development of multicultural social and parenting strategies. These approaches strive to navigate the

overlaps of institutional oppression, transnational existence, and personal conceptualizations of identity and place.

I. Mormon Histories of Latinx Inclusion and Race Relations

Past scholarship has assessed how the LDS Church has struggled to create inclusive and equitable spaces for people of color as well as indigenous and immigrant communities.⁴ Although it now maintains a larger international than domestic membership, the intersections of religious practice, gender identity, and immigration history and politics are all important in contextualizing how Latina migrant mothers experience and move within the body of the Church in the Mormon Corridor and, more broadly, US society. Many of the challenges the Church has faced both in the past and present in embracing and including underserved communities of color stem from doctrinal ideologies created by Book of Mormon interpretations regarding race, pastoral stewardship, and who has the authority to lead or speak for God.

The Book of Mormon perpetuates biblical beliefs that certain ethnic or racial lineages are deemed more “worthy” or capable to lead and preside over others.⁵ It recounts the story of one family unit that divides itself between the descendants of two brothers, Nephi and Laman. Laman and his family make divergent and “sinful” choices

4. Elise Boxer, “‘To Become White and Delightful’: American Indians and Mormon Identity” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2009); Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai‘i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Moroni Benally, “Decolonizing the Blossoming: Indigenous People’s Faith in a Colonizing Church,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (2017): 71–188.

5. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

on their journey from Israel to the American continent, while Nephi and his family obey God's commands and continue down a righteous path. This ultimately leads to a change in their physical appearances, with light-skinned Nephites becoming more "white and delightsome" and, over time, being given spiritual and physical stewardship by God over the "rebellious, cursed" darker-skinned Lamanite tribe.⁶ Much of the Book of Mormon text is spent relaying continued histories of these two conflicting tribes, with skin color leveraged as a marker of obedience and worthiness. Because Book of Mormon scripture clearly states that Lamanites were of Abrahamic heritage, they were worthy of some saving effort and fellowship. Wilford Woodruff, fourth president of the Church, viewed Anglo Mormonism as being tasked with assisting those descended of Lamanite blood to "blossom" so that "they would be filled with the power of God . . . and go forth to build the New Jerusalem."⁷ This scriptural narrative helps to contextualize the dogmatic foundations that shaped early perceptions among Church members regarding race and authority. Ultimately, because of the commandment for lighter-skinned communities to "save" their darker Lamanite brethren, they were privileged with increased status from the structural inception of Mormonism.⁸

Official Church sponsorship of missionary work and colonization of presumed "Lamanite"-dominant geographical areas in the American Southwest, Polynesia, Latin America, and the Caribbean began shortly after Mormon settlement in the Western frontier in 1847. Second Church president Brigham Young saw missionary efforts as a continuation of Church founder Joseph Smith's vision for gathering the

6. 2 Nephi 5:21, 23–24.

7. Floyd A. O'Neill and Stanford J. Layton, "Of Pride and Politics: Brigham Young as Indian Superintendent," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1978): 239–41.

8. Sylvester A. Johnson, "Accounting for Whiteness in Mormon Religion," *Mormon Studies Review* 3 (2016): 117–33.

twelve tribes of Israel together in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.⁹ White Church members felt commanded to carry out the Book of Mormon's call to graft Lamanite descendants into the faith. While efforts to include non-white peoples into the Church by proselytizing were considered "progressive" by the standards of the mid-nineteenth century, the grip of North American politics and racial attitudes on early Mormon treatment of "Lamanite" descendants cannot be ignored if we are to understand the contemporary placement and second-class citizenship of Latinx migrants in US Church spaces.

I frequented many a Sunday School lesson growing up where I was taught that the primary reason Utah was denied statehood for so long was the misunderstanding Congress had regarding the practice of polygamy. While this is generally true, polygamy was only one pillar of the Republican Party's concern for American "decency" during the mid-nineteenth century. The Party was also concerned with the other "twin relic of barbarism," which was the practice of slavery.¹⁰ Congress representative Justin Smith Morrill argued that Utah's delayed entrance was also because of the Church's participation in indigenous people's enslavement and indentured servitude. Utah was the only known US state to participate in state-sanctioned enslavement of indigenous peoples.¹¹ Because Mormons were seen as propagators of this "barbarism" on both fronts, along with accepting converts from outside Anglo ethnic groups, Church members began to experience a racialization that denoted them a degenerate breed of people who were losing their

9. Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

10. John Kincaid, "Extinguishing the Twin Relics of Barbaric Multiculturalism—Slavery and Polygamy—from American Federalism," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 33, no. 1 (2003): 75–92.

11. *The Congressional Globe*, Thirty-Eighth Congress, Second Session, Jan. 1865, 144.

holistic whiteness.¹² To counter this and promote the Church as one producing “an angelic, celestial people,” a previously hesitant Brigham Young began encouraging Anglo members to buy indigenous slaves from their captors as adoptees or house servants. He stated that God permitted Mormons “to come here for this very purpose . . . [that] the Lord could not have devised a better plan than to have put the saints where they were to help bring about the redemption of the Lamanites [and] also make them a white and delightsome people.” This was all in order to “accomplish their redemption” in addition to serving as a pathway to battle negative racialization directed at the Church from outside groups.¹³

On top of attempting to ease fears of unbelonging within the Anglo mainstream, Mormon settlers felt “white savior” pressures, as Andres Reséndez explains, which were the driving motives for the passage of the Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners in 1852. The law passed by popular consensus in the Utah territory to allow Mormon settlers to bypass the illegality of slavery within Mexican territorial lands. Church leaders felt that by purchasing indigenous slaves “into their freedom” from the horrendous conditions of illegal Mexican slave trades, they were upholding their spiritual obligation to “save” Lamanites.¹⁴ The passage of the Act allowed for the Native enslavement to continue favoring local Mormon labor markets, and additionally permitted Church leadership to continue encouraging conversion among enslaved Lamanite

12. W. Paul Reeve, “From Not White Enough to Too White: The Historical Evolution of a Mormon Race,” *Sunstone Magazine* (website), Jan. 1, 2015, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/from-not-white-enough-to-too-white-the-historical-evolution-of-a-mormon-race/>.

13. Sondra Jones, *The Trial of Don Pedro León Luján: The Attack Against Indian Slavery and the Mexican Traders in Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).

14. Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

women and children by placing them in Anglo homes where they could be “with the more favored portions of the human race.”¹⁵ Reséndez also goes on to state that: “Mormons who adopted Indians had to strive to erase their Native cultures. These pervasive attitudes prevented Indians from fully integrating into Mormon society. Mormons [had] never anticipated keeping them as ‘indentures.’ . . . [T]heir impulses to help in their redemption eased their transformation into owners and masters. In colonial times, Spanish missionaries had acquired Indians to save their souls. In the nineteenth century, Mormons’ quest to redeem Natives by purchasing them was not too different. Both ended up creating an underclass.”¹⁶

These scriptural and social contexts identify the ways in which Lamanite identity was negotiated; people perceived as Lamanite ancestors should be saved through spiritual conversion as well as cultural assimilation practices via Anglo member efforts. These contexts are also what has made upward mobilization efforts so difficult for indigenous, migrant, or resource-poor members of the Church. They are often seen as outliers, or as Others, whose stories within the context of early Mormon history or current political dialogue may not meet the expectations of the standard “faith-promoting” narrative that so many leaders wish to propagate within missionary work and social dialogues. Professor Ignacio García reaffirmed the importance of understanding the breadth of these historical placements and constructs in a plenary address to the Mormon History Association: “Too much of Mormon historical studies still tell the story of the Other. This Other is voiceless and mindless, too often we speak for them (as) it concerns the anxieties of white Mormonism. . . . History provides a language and a protocol with which to articulate thoughts and concerns. People who have history have a language that provides a sense of agency, of being in control

15. Kate B. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1943).

16. Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 245.

of their lives, or at least of being players within it.”¹⁷ García’s analysis is particularly relevant to this discussion, as the majority of mothers I interviewed shared experiences in which their Latina and Mormon identities were in conflict with one another in regard to the attitudes of Anglo-American membership. They expressed that US-born members’ ideas of faithfulness to the Church are often conflated with a willingness and loyalty to adhere to Anglo-American Church ideologies, and they often felt their efforts to contribute to the kingdom of God were marginalized by instances of discrimination or alienation, most likely due to this lack of historical narrative within English-speaking congregations. They reported that this conflict often created an environment of pressure and emotional distress that compounded their already complex negotiation between the Self and the Church. As Garcia further argues, Latinx Mormons, “need their history—the chronicle of their struggles, triumphs, and disappointments—to understand their place in a religion that in the past has required placing and timing—in the collective sense—to fit in.”¹⁸

Racialized hierarchy and differentiated levels of inclusion by race maintain their historical grip in the modern Church as they continue to influence organization, policy, and gendered social relations between Anglo-American members on the one hand and communities of color and migrants on the other. Given the Church’s complex history of domination, enslavement, servitude, and submission of “Lamanite” heritage groups, I argue that being Latinx and Mormon has been problematic in nature from the beginning. Consequently, the struggles Latinx communities have faced in Mormon histories have much larger implications for contemporary social relations and membership than previously acknowledged. It is essential that Church leaders and researchers who work within the frameworks of Mormonism focus on decolonizing any

17. García, “Finding a Mormon Identity.”

18. Ibid.

“crafted soliloquy” that minimizes the Anglo-American Church’s contribution to the oppression and marginalization of people of color.¹⁹

II. Assimilation and Latinx Belonging in an Anglo-American Landscape

Aihwa Ong conducted one of the primary cases that investigated the experience of non-white belonging within US Mormon spaces, specifically that of Cambodian refugees who converted to Mormonism in the greater Oakland, California area.²⁰ She evaluated how the Church provided economic and social stability to many in this particular migrant group, many of whom were refugees fleeing genocide and war-torn areas. She also recounted that while interviewees who attended the Khmer-speaking wards reported increased economic opportunity and spiritual belonging through Church membership, they also encountered many social and racial barriers with Anglo members as they navigated their newfound religion. Ong writes: “The transnational appeal of Mormonism has been the reaffirmation of patriarchal values and discipline . . . that assimilates less successful people or impoverished immigrants to American values of strict morality, hard work, and middle-class success. . . . Yet, Mormonism maintains a structure of racial domination.”²¹ These findings are consistent with the Church’s historical focus on grafting and incorporating migrant communities of color as preached from the pulpit for decades, especially within Latinx populations.²² The Book of Mormon’s alternate history appealed to

19. Octavio I. Romano-V, “Minorities, History and the Cultural Mystique,” *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought* 1, no. 1 (1967): 5–11.

20. Aihwa Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, and the New America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

21. *Ibid.*, 200–01.

22. Mark L. Grover, “The Maturing of the Oak: The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Latin America,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 2 (2005): 79.

many potential Latin American Church investigators, providing a theological narrative of God's belonging and divine destiny for those living in the Americas, one that existed outside of the legacies of genocide and oppression inflicted by European settler colonialism and Catholicism.²³ Assimilation, taught through a scriptural lens and propagated for many years mostly by Anglo missionaries from the US Mormon Corridor, was viewed as a natural and positive route to both inclusion and salvation. Aside from preaching to nonwhite populations, American Church leadership emphasizes the promotion of a nuclear family structure. This includes encouraging women to idealize motherhood and responsibility within the home. These perceptions reflect a larger historical lens of how the Church has appealed to nonwhite populations, as this nuclear family structure is prevalent in many parts of the world, including Latin America.

However, many mothers reported that this expectation for converts to "graft" or assimilate themselves into the gospel often requires nonwhite or immigrant members to adopt distinctly "white" Church or family traditions. One mother, Ines, shared her experience with this US Church cultural expectation. Ines came to the US from Guadalajara when she was in elementary school. She converted at seventeen and was able to adjust her legal status after marrying a Chicano citizen. Even at Ines's baptism, Church leadership involved were very aware of her legal status. When she decided to serve a mission, she went domestically to Idaho. The Church's current protocol allows undocumented missionaries to perform their service domestically so service can occur without compromising residency in the US. It was on her mission where she felt the most insecure about her legal status and immigrant status and felt

23. Michael O'Loughlin, "Competing for Hispanic Catholics: Secularism, Other Faiths Battle for Souls," *Crux* (website), July 2, 2015, <https://cruxnow.com/church/2015/07/02/competing-for-hispanic-catholics-secularism-other-faiths-battle-for-souls/>.

pressured to acculturate to Anglo-American points of view. Ines shared with me the following: “I was scared to share my status on my mission. White members were really loving until they found out I didn’t have papers. I was undocumented until I was married. Spanish wards accept you and don’t judge based on legal status; we don’t have to hide. Right now, my bishop is undocumented. He knows how it is. For me, I’m still learning to live with all my identities. Too many American members wanted me [to assimilate], but I’m glad I’ve held on to who I am.”

Ines’s words express how legal status may transform Anglo Church members’ perceptions of their migrant co-worshippers, even if they first appear “assimilated.” In Ines’s case, because she spoke English with no discernable accent and presented as more *güera*, meaning she has a lighter physical complexion, she wasn’t immediately targeted for discrimination until her citizenship came into question. Her story highlights how nonwhite Mormons experience differential levels of inclusion and acceptance, heavily dependent on local attitudes. I argue that instead of striving for this grafting, which participants felt has led to erasure, US Mormons can better serve Latina migrant women by amplifying their voices, thereby responding to many underserved communities’ need for “knowing and being known” in their intersectional spheres of lived experience.²⁴ All interviewees shared with me that they wished their migrant experiences, “illegal” or otherwise, would be treated with the same dignity, respect, and space migrant Mormon pioneers are given in Church history narratives. It is valid that these *hermanas* would ask: why are early Mormon (and mostly white) migration experiences viewed as more legitimate than theirs?

Previous scholarship has examined how the continued efforts to “graft” nonwhite and/or immigrant members of the Church has created social division and tensions between Anglo and Latino leaders

24. Roberto G. Gonzales, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

regarding stewardship of Latinx wards.²⁵ This research addressed the ever-increasing growth of Latinx membership as well as attempts to dismantle pan-ethnic Latinx wards, opting for assimilation with local English-speaking congregations. The dramatic drop in tithing and member activity in those areas where Latinx wards were forced to assimilate was profound, leading to Latinx wards being reinstated.²⁶ Other research has found that American leadership often failed to validate differing cultural expressions of faith, oftentimes minimizing Latinx members' efforts to contribute to worship sharing and practices.²⁷ These histories and social contexts within Church history and US congregations are important factors in why most mothers I spoke with who attended majority Latinx congregations at the time of interviewing believed it was an environment where they could feel safety, peace, and community.

Another reason many Latina migrants reported a preference for attending the Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking ward was to distance themselves from the idealization of Anglo mothering expectations that heavily influence US Church spaces. While many mothers came from cultural backgrounds with rigid gender norms, most interviewees felt that English-speaking ward communities were not understanding or flexible with their specific circumstances. Some mothers worried that

25. Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 102–09.

26. Mark L. Grover, review of “*In His Own Language*”: *Mormon Spanish Speaking Congregations in the United States*, by Jessie L. Embry, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1999): 211–14, available at <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol38/iss2/13/>.

27. Emily Ann Gurnon, “The Dark Face of a White Church: Latinos and Mormon Racism” (master’s thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1993), 1–17; Emily Gurnon, “Minority Mormons: Latinos and Latter-day Saints,” *Christian Century* 111, no. 5 (1994): 157–59.

they could not achieve the “ideal” of being a stay-at-home mother like many of their white counterparts. This was not financially possible due to low wages or frequent labor exploitation because of their legal status. Many chose instead to frame their sense of belonging through Church ideologies, which emphasize the role of motherhood as sacred and respected, additionally finding comfort in doctrine regarding eternal families. Even though they agree with the Church’s doctrine on the eternal value of their roles as mothers, many did not want to feel obligated or pressured to parent the same way as their Anglo Mormon peers. Many expressed feeling better supported by other mothers in the Latinx ward, who made space for their ideas or had shared interests. Mothers shared with me that this distance from the pressure of whiteness allowed them to preserve cultural traditions and support one another in handling the challenges their families faced.

Luisa was newlywed and pregnant when she and her husband crossed the border from Mexico. After they converted to the Church in New York City, a Mormon leader provided a way for her, along with her immediate and extended family, to move to Utah. Luisa reported she had her family attend the English-speaking ward while her children were growing up because it was a mostly white area, and it seemed like a good idea to help everyone adjust and fit in. While she expressed nothing but pride and love for her children, she wished they had also interacted with more Latinos by attending the Spanish-speaking ward. During our time together, she told me:

I began noticing how my kids relate and do more activities with white kids. I have a hard time with that. They didn’t keep the Mexican culture the way I wanted. For example, I visited my dad the other day at his (Latino) neighbor’s house. Right away they invited me to eat. See? That’s my culture. We are very welcoming and attentive, we notice others. I get embarrassed when my kids have friends over and don’t offer them food! I’m hoping the older they get, the more they will take interest. My daughter asked me to teach her more, so I’m happy about that. But, I still wish we had done more.

Luisa's experience highlights an important dilemma that Latina migrant mothers face in the US: how to bring up children in your own culture while preparing them to live and learn in another. In the Church as well as US society, women are still expected to be the primary caregivers and nurturers to their children. These expectations placed on women to adequately nurture as well as parent through a dual cultural lens while living with limited resources because of legal status adds layers of stress to migrant mothers. Many leaders within Mormonism, much like national policy makers, have rarely considered these realities when assessing migrant social capital or economic outcomes.

Previous research on mothers in the US has analyzed the expectations of intensive mothering as a historically constructed ideology that requires mothers to expend copious amounts of emotional and physical labor in raising children.²⁸ Much of this previous research used middle-class, white citizen participants who shared similar parenting opinions.²⁹ Studies that have sought to understand Latina migrant experiences have found that these expectations become compounded when a migrant is parenting transnationally or raising bicultural children in the US.³⁰ It is important to recognize here that these other studies reveal a similar pattern of disparities to that which we see in Mormonism. Immigrant mothers often feel a strong sense of obligation to remain connected to cultural, gendered norms of mothering from their sending countries while also facing immense pressure to

28. Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998).

29. Pamela Stone, *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

30. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila, "I'm Here, But I'm There': The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood," *Gender and Society* 11, no. 5 (1997): 548–71; Leisy J. Abrego, *Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014), 11; Joanna Dreby, *Everyday Illegal: When Policies Undermine Immigrant Families* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

assimilate to Anglo-American societal expectations.³¹ These disparities between Anglo cultural expectations for motherhood and Latina mothers' actual lived realities create a need for personalized relief and validation, often found in Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking wards where women can talk and worship with others in similar situations. For most women though, simply worshipping with other mothers in their native language is not enough.

Most Mormon leadership approaches and cultural values were created by middle-class white Americans. Many mothers I interviewed felt that the multifaceted factors that shaped their undocumented immigrant experiences were greatly oversimplified within US Church conversations, which emphasize personal agency as the primary determining factor for economic and personal success in the US rather than the support and access to resources that studies have demonstrated as most important. This, layered on top of Mormonism's historical racialization of worthiness and authority among Lamanite descendants, can create a toxic emotional health environment for migrant mothers trying to find their place. A few mothers shared traumatic incidents and mental health concerns with me that they did not have the language or space to speak about even among other Latinas or within Latinx Church communities. One interviewee, Maria Dolores, told me her experience of being pregnant when she traveled by foot from Ecuador to Mexico hoping to cross the border and join her husband and

31. Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Sara Curran, "Nicaraguans: Voices Lost, Voices Found," in *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, edited by Rubén G. Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 127–56.; Elma I. Lorenzo-Blanco, Alan Meca, Jennifer B. Unger, Andrea Romero, Melinda Gonzales-Backen, Brandy Piña-Watson, Miguel Ángel Cano, et al., "Latino Parent Acculturation Stress: Longitudinal Effects on Family Functioning and Youth Emotional and Behavioral Health," *Journal of Family Psychology* 30, no. 8 (2016): 966; Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

other children already working in the US. During her crossing of the US–Mexico border, she experienced and witnessed horrific violence. Upon her arrival, she faced unstable housing situations and food scarcity during her first years in the US and saw no outlet to process her trauma. She cites a loving bishop from the Spanish-speaking ward as her advocate, expressing that loving Church leaders allowed her the economic resources she needed to get through the transition period. However, her negative experiences continue to trouble her. Maria Dolores cried softly as she relayed:

We suffered because I didn't have papers for a long time. I had to be very strict with my children so we could stay safe, because of course racism will always exist here. Our circumstances required us to become strong. My children made me strong, and the Lord helped us survive. I also feel I was very blessed [in the US]. I know their lives have more opportunity. But I had to go through all of that [at the border] and navigate the two cultures. . . . That was so much. Looking back, if I had to do it all again, I'm not sure I would.

While almost all mothers interviewed heavily credited their faith and the Church with getting them through hard times pre- and post-migration, I often wondered if increased emotional and social support from Anglo leaders and more positive treatment from white membership might have positively affected the mental health, parenting, and economic outcomes for mothers like Maria Dolores. I believe these instances of isolation created by US Church spaces create a culture of casual but distant acceptance, as shown in previous work on Latinx paradigms within US Church spaces. Ignacio García emphasizes the importance of remembering how histories of assimilation pressures from Anglos on their Latinx counterparts have created inequalities that make it difficult for underserved communities like migrant Latinas to advocate for personal and spiritual needs at an infrastructural level. He writes: "Cultural whiteness; it remains entrenched in our institutional memory, in our manuals, sometimes in our conference

talks, and too often in the deep chambers of our minds and heart. . . . [W]hite (members) rarely see beyond a superficial exoticism in the lives of Latino Mormons. They will appreciate our culinary skills and our quick feet, but not our history or our thoughts. And we will be left with the notion that our white brothers and sisters like us, maybe even love us—but nothing substantive will change.”³² It is because of these infrastructural barriers that many mothers I interviewed developed and employed multiculturalist strategies and approaches when navigating US Mormon spaces. This occurred not only as a mechanism for survival but also created avenues to resist the underlying whiteness of the institution. Enacting their personal agency, mothers’ multiculturalist attitudes allow them to preserve, treasure, and amplify their Latinx identities and traditions within created Church spaces.

III. A Case for Multiculturalism as Resistance and Power

Navigating religious expectations in a bicultural parenting environment is not a new topic of interest in Latina migration studies, as many gendered influences regarding womanhood are based in religious influence.³³ LDS Church doctrine has prioritized and reinforced the idealization of traditional feminine roles and motherhood as a path to salvation. Past Mormon women’s studies in the US have predominantly focused on the experiences of white American citizens in their

32. Ignacio M. García, “Thoughts on Latino Mormons, Their Afterlife, and the Need for a New Historical Paradigm for Saints of Color,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (2017): 1–29.

33. Patricia Arredondo, “Mujeres Latinas—Santas y Marquesas,” *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 8, no. 4 (2002): 308–19; Rachel Hershberg and M. Brinton Lykes, “Redefining Family: Transnational Girls Narrate Experiences of Parental Migration, Detention, and Deportation,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* 14, no. 1 (2013): 14–35; Leah M. Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon: Religion, Migration, and the Mexican Dream* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

quest to find belonging in a patriarchal religious power structure.³⁴ Many of those interviewed reported feeling expected to restrict their energy to domestic spheres, religious belief, and child-rearing. Most of these traditions encourage women to personify characteristics such as self-sacrifice, family well-being, purity, and loyalty: qualities all akin to the Catholic conception of the Virgin Mary many interviewees were familiar with. Although it is not always the case, previous interviews have shown that many undocumented mothers form tight-knit networks that provide a better sense of stability for their members as they navigate parenting in a new country.³⁵ Fictive kin networks operate as a coping mechanism allowing Latina mothers to find ways to acclimatize to American life by balancing complex identities, with recent surveys indicating that multicultural and pluralistic attitudes are becoming more and more common among Latina parents.³⁶ The way

34. Catherine A Brekus, "Tanner Lecture: Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (2011): 58–87; Dorothy Allred Solomon, *The Sisterhood: Inside the Lives of Mormon Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Neylan McBaine, *Women at Church: Magnifying LDS Women's Local Impact* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014); Cory Crawford, "The Struggle for Female Authority in Biblical and Mormon Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 48, no. 2 (2015): 1–66; Curtis G. Greenfield, Pauline Lytle, and F. Myron Hays, "Living the Divine Divide: A Phenomenological Study of Mormon Mothers Who Are Career-Professional Women," *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 16, no. 1 (2016): 1–14; Neylan McBaine, "Roundtable: Mormon Women and the Anatomy of Belonging," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 193–202.

35. Edward Flores, *God's Gangs: Barrio Ministry, Masculinity, and Gang Recovery* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Claudia Roesch, *Macho Men and Modern Women: Mexican Immigration, Social Experts and Changing Family Values in the 20th Century United States*, Family Values and Social Change, vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

36. Tina U. Hancock, "Sin Papeles: Undocumented Mexicanas in the Rural United States," *Affilia* 22, no. 2 (2007): 175–84; Sujey Vega, *Latino Heartland: Of Borders and Belonging in the Midwest* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

these mothers choose to live their religious faith as well as outwardly demonstrate it within church communities is important when considering not only how social networks form but also how mothers begin to employ multicultural parenting strategies within them.³⁷

Previous research has addressed the importance of utilizing multiculturalism in Church discourse and social interaction. Historian Jorge Iber considered Utah, along with many other areas of the Mormon Corridor, to be “lands that held great promise. . . . [Their] mines, railroads and beet fields held the hope of economic possibilities.”³⁸ His work explores how the Church addressed Latinx migration patterns to Mormon-dominated areas in the early twentieth century, often employing multicultural approaches in order to find common ground and shared value systems with Spanish-speaking migrants. This not only led to increased conversion to the Church but also maintained some degree of ethnic peace between white members working alongside Latinx communities in blue-collar industries.³⁹ The work is careful to include, however, that the attitudes of many white members and prevailing narratives of Lamanite history continued to create separation and segregation between the communities. Other previous studies have addressed conflicts and pathways multiculturalist approaches have had in influencing Latinx and Anglo relations in the Church ward and stake infrastructures.⁴⁰ These conflicts often manifested themselves in the psychological or social stress Latina migrant mothers experienced

37. Peggy Levitt, “Religion as a Path to Civic Engagement,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008): 766–91; Felipe Hinojosa, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

38. Jorge Iber, *Hispanics in the Mormon Zion, 1912–1999* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

39. *Ibid.*, 19–39.

40. García, “Thoughts on Latino Mormons.”

when choosing how and when to employ multiculturalist approaches within their households.

Natalia is a biracial convert from Argentina. Her mother is Congolese and immigrated to Argentina in her youth. When her father passed away, the family moved to the eastern US, where Natalia met Mormon missionaries. She ultimately moved to Utah, which she described to me in our interview as a place with many more opportunities for undocumented members to find work and a future spouse. Now married to an Anglo Church member, Natalia expressed some of these multicultural ideas to me in her own parenting and religious approaches:

I feel you have the expectation being Latina, you can't have your kids talking back to you, you need to grab the *chancla* [sandal, sometimes used to spank] or yell at them. For [white] Mormons, you don't ever grab the *chancla*. Yelling isn't what the Lord would do. So you get both sides. What should I do? I feel like I must find common ground, and it's difficult to not feel judged. I think also in terms of language. I want my child to speak Spanish. I also want him to learn French and have his African culture, especially because he's so light-skinned. I don't want him to forget who he is or where he comes from.

Again, we see from Natalia's experiences the overlap and intersection of many worlds and the kinds of stressors that can create. All the mothers I interviewed, especially those married to white men, were very cognizant of how race would be perceived in heavily white US spaces, specifically in the Church. They also constantly must consider the layers of their heritage, their culture, US culture, Anglo Church culture, feminine gender roles, and their own personal desires as individuals living in multiple identities at once. Many interview participants felt better supported in the Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking congregations, stating that they felt more encouraged in parenting *their* way, according to *their* traditions rather than modeling their parenting choices after Anglo perspectives. This is where the idea of developing and employing

multiculturalism strategies becomes increasingly important as a means to adapt to ever-changing political, social, and cultural circumstances, both in and outside of US Church spaces.

It is in this space that we see how many mothers began to utilize overlapping and intersecting identities for their advantage and personal mobilization in Church and US society. Most mothers reported that they had to transform the pressure and their feelings of being in-between two cultures into increased opportunities for learning, exploring, and maximizing the potential for procuring economic and social resources for their families. All mothers responded at one point in our time together that it was essential to recognize the importance of raising their children multiculturally for them to have the greatest chance to be included in both American culture and that of their sending countries. Essentially, mothers reframed the negative narratives Anglo social societies (Church communities included) projected onto them to generate innovative approaches that bolstered their parenting and economic positioning. One great example of this is Fernanda. Born and raised in Curitiba, Brazil, she and her now ex-husband moved to the States with their children after a former missionary from Utah helped sponsor them and provided them housing when they arrived. Fernanda was reluctant to go to the English-speaking ward, not only because of the language barrier but because she felt more supported in raising her children in a multicultural environment. When asked about how to balance this duality, she said:

I make sure we have our Brazilian customs here in the house. We speak Portuguese, have Brazilian birthday parties, we keep our traditions. But I know this is not my country. I know because of my color I've had some negative experiences. I learned many years ago that I had to adapt to how things are in American culture. Many bills are paid online. The systems [are] different. . . . The school is different. I am so grateful I have my Church community and children [who] helped me learn. I'm able to listen and talk with my children because they are growing up in a very different culture than I did.

Like Fernanda, many mothers' parenting approaches were influenced by their own upbringings but were also challenged by different technologies, classism, colorism, and racism from Anglo communities both in and outside of the Church. Additionally, many expressed that they struggled with the fear of how to raise kids who were not so "assimilated," did not "become so white," or become so *frio* (distanced or cold) that they forgot their roots.

Mexican migrant Cecilia had to figure out how to maneuver parenthood as she experienced her own insecurities and growth as an undocumented minority woman in the white, male-dominated Church institution. Cecilia was brought from Mexico to Chicago, where her family owned multiple bakeries and were very successful. After joining the Church, the family moved to Utah. Cecilia described how her own migration experiences and questions of self-doubt with her identity have influenced her multiculturalist approaches to mothering her two children, whose father is also an undocumented migrant, but from Argentina.

In Chicago there were Mexicans and immigrants everywhere. I never questioned my identity until I came to Utah. I started to ask, am I Mexican enough? Am I too Mexican? Do I look like I should? It was rough for me to have that identity crisis, and then I wanted to overcompensate for my ethnicity. So, I want my children to embrace all three sides, especially at Church. They are American. They are Mexican. They are Argentinian. I want my children to be proud of where they are from even if they don't ever live there. I don't want others to question their identities so much. I want my children to think their way of living is something to be embraced.

Mothers like Cecilia cited that attendance in the Spanish-speaking ward allowed them to not only obtain parental support in Relief Society or from other migrant Church members but gave their children the opportunity to share space with other bicultural or multiracial children who were facing the same things as 1.5- or second-generation immigrants. This empowers mothers as they enjoy language retainment, engage in

cultural activities and traditions that may not be otherwise celebrated, and generally experience a greater sense of peace and belonging with other Latinx members. Of course, mothers were also quick to tell me some iteration of a phrase common in Church culture: “The Gospel is perfect, but the people are not.” Mothers told me conflict was “bound” to happen in pan-ethnic congregations where different countries’ cultures or politics may conflict and members undergo personality clashes. But overall, mothers felt more secure taking their children to pan-ethnic spaces where they could better engage with a broadly Latinx heritage and cultural environment not found in white, Anglo US Church spaces.

Andrea, another mother who spoke with me, was born in Costa Rica to Peruvian parents who were already members of the Church. After her parents arrived in the US, they separated shortly thereafter, with her mother remarrying a Jewish Cuban man. She described how living undocumented in a multicultural household affected her personal perspectives. Although at times it was incredibly difficult, she felt it improved her worldview and made her a more Christlike and spiritual person. She is now married to a white Church member, and she told me it was a struggle with her in-laws to demonstrate the benefits of multicultural approaches in raising their grandchildren. It was not until she brought her husband to the Spanish-speaking ward that he was able to see why raising their children in a Latinx environment was so important to her. She exclaimed:

I’m very proud of my culture! I want my children to love it. I took my husband and kids to Church hoping they would learn Spanish and the Latino mindset. My husband grew up seeing the negative stereotypes but married into my family, and now he sees the beautiful too. He saw that Latinos work hard. We come, we contribute, and we fight to tell our story. I want my children to never feel ashamed of where we come from. Now he understands in a way he couldn’t before. . . . Hopefully my in-laws can [become] more open-minded too.

For mothers who expressed a desire to preserve their traditions like Andrea, active measures to assert themselves and their children through

salient multiculturalism meant active participation in the Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking wards, which better allowed them to implement elements from each of their respective backgrounds to rear adaptable, culturally aware American, Latinx, Mormon children. The more pressure mothers felt from Anglo Church society to “assimilate,” the more motivated mothers appeared to be to take their children to dominantly Latinx spaces. Fictive kin groups of mothers within the Church then become not only spaces formed as a strategy for survival in the US but are platforms in which these women can assert their personal agency and power to resist the overreaches of white patriarchy within the Church institution.

As immigration, gender, and religious politics are highly unlikely to decrease in importance in our daily societal interactions, we must look to subcommunities like Latina migrant Mormons, who tactically employ multiculturalism as a form of resistance in the face of resource and social capital scarcity for examples of adaptive parenting. Their efforts are consistent with previous research that has discussed how small-scale actions, sometimes called “weapons of the weak,” can alter community experiences within an institution but do not risk threatening the overall power structure and, thereby, the benefits of group membership.⁴¹ I believe it’s important to recognize why Latina migrants, along with other underrepresented communities within Mormonism, have had to employ these adaptive tactics in order to be recognized for their immense contributions and unseen labor given to the mainstream Church. Church resources should be used to alleviate the disparities nonwhite/immigrant communities currently face instead of furthering their marginalization.

I am acutely aware that Mormons have historically been a controversial, misunderstood community. Latina migrants who are deeply underrepresented or similarly misunderstood in US society have been able to find recognition and pathways to success within US Church

41. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2015).

spaces. This should be recognized, as it has created an intense feeling of belonging and loyalty among many I interviewed. Loyalty from the white US Church, though, has often required a cost from Latina migrants—one that can compromise or erase identity and place by succumbing to Anglo assimilation pressures. My hope in conducting this study was to first and foremost amplify the diverse voices, circumstances, and contributions of Latina migrant mothers, many of whom are women I grew up with and who mothered me. I remain passionate about authentically sharing their stories. My secondary but equally important goal was to begin to lay a conversational foundation that asks both the LDS Church institution and its Anglo US communities to evaluate where it is succeeding or failing in assisting members who face intersecting societal disadvantages. By understanding underserved populations' perspectives on what the US Church can and *must* do better, we as a Church society can begin *intentional* action for structural and sociocultural change. I believe that in doing so, the Church could be a model for other influential religious and government bodies. Using the immense resource capital within Mormonism's (inter)national political and social landscapes, we can pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive future. It is a long road that requires recognition and reparation with the past and sincere preparation for the future. That, to me, as both researcher and Church member, is the most effective and purposeful way we can exemplify and create true reciprocity within our religious societies and *hermandades*.

BRITTANY ROMANELLO {bromanel@asu.edu} is a sociocultural anthropology doctoral student at Arizona State University and current Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship consultant. Her work centers on understanding what intersectional impacts immigration policy, social justice, and gender have on immigrant mothers' domestic care decisions. She is additionally interested in exploring how unprotected legal status may influence migrant mothers' social network development and resource accessibility within US religious contexts. Her dissertation will document how Latina migrant mothers perceive and negotiate personal and social belonging while navigating majority-Anglo US Church spaces.



Linda Hoffman Kimball
Iceland
aquatint

THE OTHER CRIME: ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION IN NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY UTAH

Amanda Hendrix-Komoto

On a shelf in my office, I have a small red container marked “Chichester’s English Red Cross Diamond Brand Pennyroyal Pills.” I bought it in a moment of curiosity after learning that Utah’s newspapers once advertised abortion pills. The inside of the tin features a woman reclining on a moon. She promises consumers that Chichester’s pills “are the most powerful and reliable emmenagogue known” and are “safe, sure and always effectual.” Students rarely, if ever, notice the box, which sits in front of a Christmas ornament honoring Jeannette Rankin, an early female politician and pacifist from Montana, and next to a potato scrubber. Even if they did, it is unlikely that they would guess that it was a container for abortion pills.

Since graduate school, I have been friends with several women whose academic work focuses on reproductive justice. In a particularly poignant piece, my friend Lauren MacIvor Thompson connects a man “punching his wife when she didn’t undress fast enough for sex” to his support for a fetal heartbeat bill.¹ Although I have been interested in

1. Lauren MacIvor Thompson, “Women Have Fought to Legalize Reproductive Rights for Nearly Two Centuries,” *History News Network*, June 9, 2019, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/172181>. Dr. MacIvor Thompson has also pointed out in private conversations with me that heartbeat is inaccurate and puts the word in quotation marks in her own article. At six weeks

the history of abortion and contraception for several years, I have not joined my colleagues in publishing on the subject. I feared that I would not be able to write a piece that was interesting to both academics and popular audiences and that the politically divisive nature of the topic would alienate people I needed to support me as a junior scholar.

My friends' engagement with public history, however, has convinced me of the need to engage with wider audiences. On social media and in an article published in the *New York Times*, for example, MacIvor Thompson has argued for the importance of detailed historical analysis when discussing abortion and birth control. Her deft exposition of the coded language that women used to discuss abortion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrates the need for historical expertise when analyzing women's history.² Discussions of abortion and birth control within Latter-day Saint communities, however, often lack the historical awareness for which MacIvor Thompson and others have called.³ This essay is an attempt to provide an overview

of gestation, the fetus does not have a fully formed heart. Instead, what we see on an ultrasound is the electrical activity of the cells that will eventually become the heart. For a full explanation of the misleading nature of the term "heartbeat" and its use in contemporary politics, see "Doctor's Organization: Calling Abortion Bans 'Fetal Heartbeat Bills' is Misleading," *Guardian*, June 5, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/05/abortion-doctors-fetal-heartbeat-bills-language-misleading>.

2. See Lauren MacIvor Thompson (@lmacthompson1), "1/Good morning! I am compelled to write my first ever tweet thread because @CokieRoberts on @NPR this morning stated that she could not find abortion ads in 19th newspapers and therefore historians are just playing at pro-choice politics," Twitter, June 5, 2019, 6:26 a.m., <https://twitter.com/lmacthompson1/status/1136247963817304064>; and MacIvor Thompson, "Women Have Always Had Abortions," *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/13/opinion/sunday/abortion-history-women.html>.

3. I have chosen to use the Church's style guide as much as possible for this article. Since I am not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it seemed important to try respect the Church's wishes as much as possible, especially when dealing with a sensitive topic such as this one.

of scholarship on the history of contraception and abortion as it relates to Latter-day Saint women.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, most people did not consider a fetus to be “alive” before it quickened, nor was first-trimester abortion illegal. Most authorities considered birth control and abortion to be under the purview of midwives and part of women’s health care.⁴ Latter-day Saint understandings of women’s bodies and pregnancy closely mirrored those of other Americans at the time. In this essay, I discuss this history, present evidence that Latter-day Saint men sold abortion pills in the late nineteenth century, and argue that it is likely some Latter-day Saint women took them in an attempt to restore menstrual cycles that anemia, pregnancy, or illness had temporarily “stopped.” Women living in the twenty-first century are unable to access these earlier understandings of pregnancy because the way we understand pregnancy has changed as a result of debates over the criminalization of abortion and the development of ultrasound technology. Reconstructing this history is important, however, because it provides a context for our own discussions of women’s bodies and reproductive rights. Too often, these discussions are ahistorical, and Latter-day Saints and their neighbors act as though society has always understood women’s bodies, pregnancy, and the origins of life in the same way.

One of the things that I have learned from my colleagues is that abortion was once fairly common and unremarkable. Until recently, there was no way for a woman to know for certain that she was pregnant until she felt the baby quicken or move. A woman whose period had stopped might be experiencing malnutrition or illness, or she might be pregnant.⁵ If women saw the cessation of their menses as a sign of ill

4. Tatjana Buklijas and Nick Hopwood, “Experiencing Pregnancy,” *Making Visible Embryos* (website), http://www.sites.hps.cam.ac.uk/visibleembryos/sl_1.html.

5. John M. Riddle, *Eve’s Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 26.

health, they could take medicine to restore their menstrual flow. Sometimes these medicines induced an abortion; at other times, they likely provoked menstruation in women who were anemic or malnourished. It was impossible to distinguish between these two outcomes. As historian John Riddle argues in his own discussion of the issue, a medieval woman “could not possibly know whether she had assisted a natural process or terminated a very early pregnancy.” Nor would she have framed the question in that way. In the medieval period, women and doctors did not see “pregnancy” as starting “at conception or implantation.”⁶ Indeed, early signs of pregnancy were ambiguous. According to an online exhibit by Tatjana Buklijas and Nick Hopwood, women in the medieval and early modern periods lived “perched between good growth and evil stagnation” of their bodily fluids.⁷ The authors make the same point as Riddle about differing definitions of pregnancy and the inability of women in that time period to differentiate between an early abortion and late menstruation. The ambiguity in which women lived was a part of their daily experience and points to the gap between their experiences and ours.

Women have long practiced contraception and abortion. John Riddle describes an affair between a Catholic priest and a widow in fourteenth-century France that has provided scholars with information about late-medieval birth control. Inquisition records suggest that the priest often brought “with him [an] herb wrapped in a linen cloth” whenever they had sex. He placed it on “a long string,” which hung from her neck “between [her] breasts.” It is unclear how exactly the herb worked, but Riddle argues that the priest likely placed it in her vagina.⁸ Although the priest was eventually accused of heresy, these accusations should not blind us to the existence of birth control in medieval Europe.

6. Ibid.

7. Buklijas and Hopwood, “Experiencing Pregnancy.”

8. Quoted in Riddle, *Eve's Herbs*, 22–23.

Medieval women used a variety of contraceptive methods, including the withdrawal method, to prevent pregnancy.⁹ A ninth-century medical text also contains directions for restoring the menses.¹⁰ Centuries later, women in the nineteenth-century United States used teas made from pennyroyal to induce miscarriages. One of my students tells a story of her rural Wyoming grandmother making her own pessaries in the 1930s, which an unfortunate visitor once mistook for treats (much to his dismay).¹¹ What these examples demonstrate is that knowledge circulated between women in a variety of places and contexts about how to prevent pregnancies and how to use items from their kitchens to do so.

Understandings of abortion and pregnancy began to change in the mid-nineteenth century. Male physicians launched a campaign to redefine how women thought of their bodies and abortion.¹² Historians like Jennifer Holland, Leslie Reagan, and Judith Leavitt have argued that the campaign was ultimately about the prestige of male doctors and academics who sought to establish themselves as authorities

9. Maryanne Kowaleski, "Gendering Demographic Change in the Middle Ages," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, edited by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 190.

10. Jessica Cale, "Sex, Contraception, and Abortion in Medieval England," *Dirty, Sexy History* (blog), July 17, 2017, <https://dirtysexyhistory.com/2017/07/30/sex-contraception-and-abortion-in-medieval-england/>; Hunter S. Jones, et al., *Sexuality and its Impact on History: The British Stripped Bare* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2018), 62.

11. Andi Powers, "Bitter Lessons," *High Altitude History* (blog), Mar. 8, 2017, <https://historymsu.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/bitter-lessons-andi-powers/>.

12. Jennifer L. Holland, "Abolishing Abortion: The History of the Pro-Life Movement in America," *American Historian*, Nov. 2016, <https://tah.oah.org/november-2016/abolishing-abortion-the-history-of-the-pro-life-movement-in-america/>.

over women's reproductive health.¹³ In the 1850s, the American Medical Association (AMA) began a campaign to criminalize abortion and discredit midwives. In an article on "criminal abortion," the AMA asserted "the independent and actual existence of the child before birth, as a living being" and urged people to protect that life.¹⁴ The famous American phrenologist Orson Squire Fowler accused a particularly famous purveyor of female pills of "destroying the lives of both mothers and embryo human beings to an incredible extent."¹⁵ He advocated for her arrest in print. "If human life," he wrote, "should be protected by law—if murderers should be punished by law's most severe penalties—she surely should be punished, and her deathly practice be at once arrested."¹⁶ In the second half of the nineteenth century, states began to pass laws criminalizing abortion. It is important to note here, as Holland has done, that the emphasis on the "life" of the fetus "was not a result of any advancements in embryonic knowledge. In fact, there were none during these campaigns."¹⁷

The first generations of Latter-day Saints developed their understanding of pregnancy during this tumultuous time period. Their understandings of the body, however, do not fit easily within this

13. Holland, "Abolishing Abortion;" Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867–1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

14. Cited in D. Brian Scarnecchia, *Bioethics, Law, and Human Life Issues: A Catholic Perspective on Marriage, Family, Contraception, Abortion, Reproductive Technology, and Death and Dying* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 280.

15. Orson Squire Fowler, *Love and Parentage: Applied to the Improvement of Offspring* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1852), 68.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Holland, "Abolishing Abortion"; Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime*; Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*.

timeline. On the one hand, Latter-day Saints believed that the soul was not created at the same time as the physical body. Instead, they believed that the soul existed before it became embodied in human flesh.¹⁸ Orson Pratt, for example, argued in 1853 that human souls “were present when the foundations of the earth were laid” and “sang and shouted for joy” as they watched creation. He believed that an individual’s body became enjoined with their soul in the womb.¹⁹ Two decades later, Brigham Young identified quickening as the moment when a fetus became alive during a funeral sermon for a Latter-day Saint named Thomas Williams. He told the mourners that “when the mother feels life come to her infant, it is the spirit entering the body preparatory to the immortal existence.”²⁰ These statements by Young and Pratt were perfectly consonant with the understandings of pregnancy widely accepted during the early modern period, which had placed the beginning of life at quickening and accepted abortion in the first trimester as a return of menstruation.

Latter-day Saint leaders, however, also made speeches denouncing abortion despite the fact that their theology did not necessarily require doing so. In 1867, Young explicitly decried attempts to avoid infanticide through “the other equally great crime.” Some scholars have interpreted his statement as a reference to abortion, but he could also be referring to birth control.²¹ In 1884, Erastus Snow lauded Latter-day Saint women

18. Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

19. Orson Pratt, “The Pre-existence of Man,” *Seer* 1, no. 2 (February 1853): 20. Thank you to Matthew Bowman for pointing me toward this source.

20. Brigham Young, July 19, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 17:143.

21. Brigham Young, Aug. 17, 1867, *Journal of Discourses*, 12:120. See Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Surprise! The LDS Church Can Be Seen as More ‘Pro-Choice’ than Pro-Life on Abortion. Here’s Why,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 1, 2019, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/06/01/surprise-lds-church-can/>; and Lynn D. Wardle, “Teaching Correct Principles: The Experience of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Responding to Widespread Social Acceptance of Elective Abortion,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Jan. 2014): 112.

for refusing to patronize “the vendor of noxious, poisonous, destructive medicines to procure abortion, infanticide, child murder, and other wicked devices.”²² Snow and Young never explicitly define abortion, but it appears that they accepted the arguments of the American Medical Association decrying abortion even as they rejected their position about when life began.

It is important, however, not to just examine the sermons and speeches of elite Latter-day Saint men. Although Latter-day Saint leaders railed against abortion, there is evidence that some of their female followers took medications to regulate their periods and did so without much censure. In 1896, a Latter-day Saint female physician named Hannah Sorensen published an obstetrical textbook designed to provide women with information about their bodies. She had attended medical school in Denmark in the 1860s before converting to the LDS Church and traveling to Utah, where she set up a practice.²³ Sorensen accused the Latter-day Saint patients she saw in her practice as having “a terrible misunderstanding in regard to foetal life.” Perhaps with disbelief or even disdain, she wrote, “Many believe it is no sin to produce abortion before there is life, but there is always life.”²⁴ Her descriptions of her encounters with Latter-day Saint women suggest that some of them agreed with their contemporaries that quickening represented the

22. Erastus Snow, Mar. 9, 1884, *Journal of Discourses*, 25:111–12. Although I have consulted the *Journal of Discourses* for these citations, many of them have been previously referenced by Lester Bush, and readers would do well to reference his work. See Lester E. Bush, Jr., “Birth Control among the Mormons: Introduction to an Insistent Question,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 2 (1976): 12–44.

23. Robert S. McPherson and Mary Lou Mueller, “Divine Duty: Hannah Sorensen and Midwifery in Southeastern Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1997): 336.

24. Hannah Sorensen, *What Women Should Know* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1896), 80.

soul coming into the body of an infant and did not see early abortion as a moral issue.

Like their counterparts throughout the United States, Utah newspapers advertised abortion pills. Increasing restrictions on abortion and birth control meant that the advertisements used euphemisms to refer to the pills' effects, but they were ubiquitous. A quick newspaper search using the database Newspapers.com reveals advertisements in a long list of Utah newspapers, including the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Daily Enquirer* (Provo), the *Standard* (Ogden), the *Wasatch Wave* (Heber), the *Ephraim Enterprise*, the *Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City), the *Transcript-Bulletin* (Tooele), and the *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City).²⁵ Reed Smoot, a future Utah senator and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, owned a drug company in Provo that sold Mesmin's French Female Pills. An ad in the Provo *Daily Enquirer* styled the pills "The Ladies' Friend" and promised "immediate relief of Painful, and Irregular Menses, Female Weakness etc."²⁶ The *Deseret Evening News* assured women in 1910 that Dr. Martel's Female Pills could be found "for sale at all drug stores."²⁷ And, as a final example, a British convert named William Driver stocked Dr. Mott's Pennyroyal Pills in his store in Ogden, Utah.²⁸ Although I have been unable to find a direct statement from a Latter-day Saint woman describing her experience taking female pills, it is likely that some women did so. Otherwise, Hannah Sorensen would

25. In this case, I used Newspapers.com to find these examples, but a similar search could be performed using *Chronicling America* (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) or any number of sites.

26. Advertisement, *Daily Enquirer* 7, no. 88, Apr. 10, 1893, 2, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42896775/>.

27. Advertisement, *Deseret Evening News*, Sept. 12, 1910, 9, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42896791/>.

28. Advertisement, *Standard*, May 2, 1893, 2, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42896809/>.

have had no reason to lodge her complaint and Latter-day Saint businessmen would not have stocked them.

Sorensen found this situation troubling. In her obstetrical textbook, she dismissed the idea that it was “no sin” to have an abortion before quickening by arguing that “life” existed “from the moment of conception.”²⁹ She also tried to convince Latter-day Saint women of the rightness of her position by giving classes on the subject. The notes that women took during her lectures and classes give us a window into changing Latter-day Saint attitudes about women and pregnancy. The George Teasdale collection contains the notes that Rosa B. Hayes took while listening to Sorensen lecture in 1889. Her notes locate the origins of pregnancy in the first moments after conception. Immediately after this event, she notes, “great changes take place in the system, causing many little troubles and ailments.”³⁰ “All ther [*sic*] nature,” she continued, “is in sympathy with, and lends assistance to develop the new being.”³¹ She encouraged any pregnant woman to “ask *Him* to help her observe all the rules of nature, keep her mind placid, and contemplate on the future of her offspring.”³² Women were to avoid eating “pork, pickles, beans, onions, bacon, unripe fruit, mustard, horse radish, cabbage, tea, coffee and all other stimulants.”³³ Sex was also forbidden as was her usual routine of “hard work.”³⁴ This new understanding of pregnancy encouraged women to see their bodies as vessels for potential life. It is difficult to know how Latter-day Saint women as a whole responded to Sorensen’s lectures and classes. While women like Rosa

29. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 80.

30. Rosa B. Hayes, *Midwife Instruction Book*, 1889, p. 24, George Teasdale Papers, box 21, folder 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

31. *Ibid.*, 24.

32. *Ibid.*, 26

33. *Ibid.*, 29.

34. *Ibid.*, 31.

Hayes welcomed Sorensen's information, others likely rejected it as nonsense. The latter were unlikely to leave records of their opinions.

By the late nineteenth century, attitudes surrounding abortion had already begun to change. Within a few decades, Latter-day Saint women would experience increased pressure to have large families. The *Relief Society Magazine* published a series of statements from members of the Quorum of Twelve on birth control in its July 1916 issue. Rudger Clawson called the decision to limit family size "a serious evil"—"especially among the rich who have ample means to support large families."³⁵ Joseph Fielding Smith argued that "it is just as much murder to destroy life before as it is after birth."³⁶ Likewise, Orson F. Whitney wrote that "the only legitimate 'birth control' [was] that which springs naturally from the observance of divine laws."³⁷ The frontispiece featured a collage of young children and infants as an explicit argument for the value of children.

It is difficult for women born in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries to imagine how women living in earlier time periods experienced pregnancy. Modern photography and ultrasound technology have transformed how we understand early pregnancy. In 1965, *Life* magazine published an emblematic set of photos of the fetus. The images invited people to imagine fetuses at each stage of development. One depicted an eighteen-week-old fetus, in the words of one historian, "radiant and floating in a bubble-like amniotic sac." The same historian continues, "It is the image of a sleeping infant, eyes closed, head turned to the side, petite and glowing against a black background flecked with star-like matter."³⁸

35. "Birth Control," *Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 7 (July 1916): 364.

36. *Ibid.*, 368.

37. *Ibid.*, 367.

38. Ann Neumann, "The Visual Politics of Abortion," *The Reveal* (blog), Mar. 8, 2017, <https://therevealer.org/the-patient-body-visual-politics-of-abortion/> For the original images, see Lennart Nilsson, "Drama of Life Before Birth," *Life*, Apr. 30, 1965, 54–71.

Around the same time, doctors began to “see” inside the womb using ultrasound technology. Newspapers around the United States printed articles about the innovation’s promise: one woman from a Boston suburb discovered that she was having twins; a doctor in Colorado urged its use in conjunction with amniocentesis to diagnose Down syndrome; and an Alaska hospital used it to predict difficult deliveries.³⁹ Ultrasound has given us the illusion of direct access to the womb and has created the idea that the infant is a separate patient from its mother.⁴⁰ Before the mid-twentieth century, women did not have access to these technologies and saw early pregnancy as an indeterminate state.

It is difficult to recapture the uncertainty that existed around early pregnancy in the nineteenth century. It is impossible to remove ourselves from the technologies and cultural concepts that shape our relationships to our bodies and pregnancies. I became pregnant with my second child at a difficult time in my life. I had just started a tenure-track job and was struggling to connect to people at the university. After I took the pregnancy test, I remember thinking that no matter what happened that it would be me and this child. My thoughts were directed at an embryo that was just a few weeks old. Although I like to

39. Respectively, “Ultrasound Tells Mom ‘Twins Due,’” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, Nov. 14, 1971, 12, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42901981/>; Joanne Koch, “Tests are Urged for Late Pregnancies,” *Daily Times-News* (Burlington, N.C.), Jan. 28, 1976, 11A, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42902070/>; and Diane Simmons, “Hospital Squeeze is Result of More Patients, More Deliveries,” *Fairbanks Daily News*, Mar. 24, 1976, A-11, available at <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/42902070/>.

40. For analyses of the role ultrasound has played in changing pregnancy, see Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, translated by Lee Hoinacki (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Malcolm Nicolson and John E. E. Fleming, *Imaging and Imagining the Fetus: The Development of Obstetric Ultrasound* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); and Sarah Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn: A History of the Fetus in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

imagine those thoughts as completely my own, they were made possible by decades of imagining the fetus as a separate being. Changing understandings of pregnancy have also shaped how Latter-day Saints relate to their bodies. Like their non-Mormon sisters, Latter-day Saint women initially placed the beginning of life in the womb at quickening and likely used a variety of herbal remedies to regulate their periods and pregnancy. Debates over abortion in the second half of the nineteenth century politicized women's control over their bodies and created the idea of conception as the moment in which individual human lives began. The current stance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on abortion is that "human life is a sacred gift from God" and that "elective abortion for personal or social convenience is contrary to the will and the commandments of God."⁴¹ It is important to remember, however, that Latter-day Saints have not always agreed on when life began and, as a result, have not always accepted that early abortion is a sin. It is important to ground our discussions of abortion and reproductive rights in a historical context. Too often, these conversations proceed as though our understandings of women's bodies and the nature of life within the womb are self-evident.

41. "Abortion," *Gospel Topics*, accessed Sept. 29, 2019, available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/abortion?lang=eng>.

AMANDA HENDRIX-KOMOTO {amanda.hendrixkomoto@montana.edu} is an assistant professor at Montana State University in the Department of History and Philosophy. She received a BA from the College of Idaho and a PhD from the University of Michigan. Her book *Imperial Zions: Race, Sex, and Religion in the American West* is under contract at the University of Nebraska Press. It explores how American ideas about sexuality shaped Latter-day Saint missionary work among Polynesians and Native Americans.



Linda Hoffman Kimball
Zion National Park
scratchboard

WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE AS AUTHORITY: ANTENARRATIVES AND INTERACTIONAL POWER AS TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Emily January Petersen

Introduction

After presenting my research on 1970s Mormon motherhood at a national rhetoric conference in 2017, a woman in the audience (also a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) called my research “old news” and made some harsh and disparaging remarks about my analysis. I was upset by her comments, but one of my co-panelists defended me, and after the presentation, five people came up to talk with me about my research in positive terms. One master’s student wanted to know how she could do similar research.

I have been thinking about this experience for a while now, and I cannot help but contrast it with what happened when I presented an analysis of early-twentieth-century Mormon motherhood at the Mormon History Association in 2016. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (Pulitzer Prize winner, historian, Latter-day Saint, Harvard professor) attended my presentation. She had purchased some vintage prints of children and mothers at the Relief Society Bazaar, and she gifted these prints to me. She did not criticize my research, nor did she tell me that my work was too simplistic or that it had already been done. She has acted similarly toward me every time we meet (and I know she does not remember who I am; I’m another starstruck, early-career professor and

scholar who thinks of her as a celebrity). Laurel has always been kind, supportive, encouraging, and humble. There is something magical about the way she uses her power and prestige to encourage and uplift rather than tear down. Her example of positive mentoring and support is one that I hope to follow in my own academic career.

I can tell these two narratives about my experiences with other Mormon women and how they have treated me in academia. These two narratives compete with one another. The first narrative seems to be the dominant narrative. It was public, others witnessed it, and the woman speaking unkindly about my research was loud and spoke for a long time. She commanded attention during the question and answer period, and people likely remember that event. She claimed power in the moment through the convention of the situation: a question and answer session. She did not have a question, but she used the opening to take over and voice her disapproval. Perhaps this woman knew that her comments were one-dimensional and failed to acknowledge a variety of experiences and lenses, but she chose to focus in on the idea that everybody already knew what I had presented and that the narrative of the familiar within motherhood rhetorics was obvious. Perhaps she favored a particular narrative about what it means to enact motherhood identity within an LDS context, and even when presented with contradicting antenarratives from my research, she had to publicly reject those in order to make sense of her preferred narrative. She likely already knows much of what I presented, as she lived through it, but because the dominant narrative has not changed much in forty years, she felt obliged to remind us that the ideas had been around and that dominant cultural norms are difficult to budge.

The other narrative, the one that takes into account my various experiences, known only to me, and that focuses on the kind and quiet response to my research is an antenarrative, or a contrasting fragment that tells a different story about what my experience as a researcher of women's documentation and communication about

Mormon motherhood has been like. Laurel, as an experienced scholar, is probably aware of the multiple antenarratives related to Mormon women's experiences around identities of motherhood. Further, she has likely pondered the antenarrative of what it means to be an early-career scholar presenting information to a more experienced audience. It seems that she chose to take such knowledge into account before reacting to my presentation, allowing me to experience narratives and antenarratives of LDS motherhood from my perspective. Laurel used the power she already possesses, by virtue of her success, to flatten the hierarchy of scholarly smarts. She knows the conventions of academia and the posturing that sometimes happens. She chose to interact within that community differently, using her power to change the way junior scholars are sometimes treated. The grace of antenarrative fragments was not extended to me by the woman in the first scenario.

I could tell numerous narratives about my research, my church experiences, my social life, my motherhood, and my marriage. Some of these are well known to others. The antenarratives are the fragments of experience that are not widely known and that change the way I think about those parts of my life. We all have many narratives that shape us, and how we privilege, give power to, enact, and make known certain narratives can affect how we feel about those experiences and how we understand our identities. Further, we may not be aware of the antenarratives guiding the lives of others, or how well known such antenarratives are when we talk about communal identities or experiences such as motherhood. We may attempt to shut down antenarratives in public settings, especially when they do not conform to our personal experiences or the codified ideas within a community.

The institution of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also presents us with narratives and has a powerful presence in the lives of its members. The privileged master narratives of being a member of the Church have changed over the years, but they continue to affect us, especially if our personal narratives differ from the prescribed norms

and stories. Antenarratives contrast with and contradict master narratives; they are the dialectic to narrative, and for any grand or sanctioned narrative, there are numerous local antenarratives waiting to be voiced and to unravel the narrative into numerous threads.¹ Paying attention to antenarratives can capture the authenticity of the LDS experience, especially for women: we may adhere to, learn, reject, or help to define dominant narratives, but when it comes to living that prescribed narrative, we often splinter the overarching story of what it means to be a Mormon woman into tiny fragments based on individuality. Perhaps our antenarratives fit with other women; perhaps they do not. Either way, antenarrative is one way of understanding many unique stories and the possibility of claiming individual power through storytelling and communication in any situation.

We must highlight and seek out the antenarrative to challenge what Audre Lorde has called “the mythical norm,” or narratives that harm us and others by leading us to believe that we are too different.² Understanding the many ways in which power works allows us to claim experiences as authority, to maneuver within and around institutional norms, and ultimately to create change where we need it. Those who are marginalized may actually know more about power than those who think they possess it. Alison Wylie posits, “those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemically privileged in some crucial respects. They may know different things, or know some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their

1. David M. Boje, “The Antenarrative Turn in Narrative Studies,” in *Communicative Practices in Workplaces and the Professions: Cultural Perspectives on the Regulation of Discourse and Organizations*, edited by Mark Zachry and Charlotte Thralls (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood, 2007), 225.

2. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1984), 116.

experience.”³ Such experiences and knowledges are found in the ante-narratives, or the hidden stories of experience waiting to be voiced. Women in the LDS Church and culture understand their experiences differently than how identities are presented to us over the pulpit. We are privileged with the knowledge we gain through experience. Such experiences give us authority over our own lives and identities.

This article overviews various theories of power, establishing that power is ultimately interactional, malleable, and claimable (demonstrated with short examples). I then present examples of antenarratives that highlight the ways in which LDS women have claimed power and resisted dominant narratives historically. These antenarratives, and others waiting to be told, have the ability to rewrite our stories. We can reject the narratives created for us and replace them with our own.

Power as Interactional

Many people think of power as the ability to control a situation, with the belief that power can be possessed or controlled. The person in charge has the power, right? This is what I call hierarchical power, and according to French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, women exercise this type of power fully “only on condition that they leave the appearance of power, that is, its official manifestation, to the men.”⁴ Women and others without sanctioned authority may use this kind of power to gain favor with those in charge. They maintain the status quo for personal gain, and hierarchical organizations use such power to rationalize their authority without question.⁵ This includes dominant narratives,

3. Alison Wylie, “Why Standpoint Matters,” in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004), 339.

4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 41.

5. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 35–36.

systems, rules, and norms that influence the community of the institution. Such power impacts those who do not hold positions of power within the institution and may regulate the way people interact within the institution and outside of it. The social privileges of the institution maintain the hierarchy, and the dominant group will decide the “entitlement, sanction, power, immunity, and advantage or right granted” to those within the system.⁶ Overall, hierarchical power “works to develop and maintain the quiescence of the powerless. . . . Together, patterns of power and powerlessness can keep issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, and interests from being recognized.”⁷ This power is disciplinary, and institutions will “refer individuals from one disciplinary authority to another.”⁸ It keeps members of an institution under control.

Power can also be mediated and social, meaning that “people who appear marginal or whom history has rendered invisible may be performing activities of crucial importance for the group as a whole.”⁹ This highlights the importance of including antenarratives as powerful contradictions to the prescribed norms and histories of a community. We can understand that women, usually left out of hierarchical decision-making and dominant narratives, can and do influence institutions. That influence may not be recognized by the institution itself, but it

6. Linda L. Black and David Stone, “Expanding the Definition of Privilege: The Concept of Social Privilege,” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 33, no. 4 (2005): 243.

7. John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), vii.

8. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 226–27.

9. Kathryn A. Neeley, “Woman as Mediatrix: Women as Writers on Science and Technology in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* 35, no. 4 (1992): 210.

nevertheless occurs and can be recovered and reworked into the narrative. Antenarratives become part of the story when they are visible.

This leads to the more nuanced version of power that I embrace as a scholar: the idea that power is transitional, fluid, negotiated, and claimable. According to communication scholar Barbara Schneider, power is always interactional, and “[s]ocial settings are never settled once and for all; they are constantly shifting, constantly accomplished in social interaction. Even when the conventions of an organization seem settled.”¹⁰ Those who do not necessarily have power bestowed on them from hierarchical authority can find ways to maneuver within and around institutional constraints and claim power for themselves.

The following section overviews five characteristics of interactional power. Each one is followed with an example within the context of the Church.

1. *“People in organizations use the interactional and interpretive conventions available to them to construct . . . the power relations of the organization.”*¹¹

One of the conventions or genres of Church is giving talks. It happens in sacrament meeting, at general conference, and in devotionals. Using a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional in 2014, Julie Willis changed the way we think about asking questions as a church. She used the genre of a speech or “talk” to reframe the rhetoric around questioning. She noted that “[a]sking questions is part of our religious heritage,” that questions “can be sources of intellectual stimulation and light,” and that “questions are not forbidden and can be embraced with

10. Barbara Schneider, “Power as Interactional Accomplishment: An Ethnomethodological Perspective on the Regulation of Communicative Practice in Organizations,” in *Communicative Practices in Workplaces and the Professions: Cultural Perspectives on the Regulation of Discourse and Organizations*, edited by Mark Zachry and Charlotte Thralls (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood, 2007), 187.

11. Ibid.

faith.”¹² Her ability to use both language and interpretive conventions to reconstruct the way we think about questioning, a word that often had a negative connotation in LDS parlance before 2014, shifted the power dynamics of what it means to doubt and what it means to be inquisitive as a Church member.

2. “[T]he social realities of organizational settings are constructed through language use and social interaction among setting participants.”¹³

The Relief Society was started by a group of women in Nauvoo as a sewing circle, eventually expanding their efforts to form a ladies’ society.¹⁴ They first took steps to initiate the social interaction for women, and then Joseph Smith made it an official part of the Church organization. The Relief Society would not exist without the initiative of these women who used language and women’s work to create an official social group. The purpose of the first meeting, sewing, is an antenarrative detail to the larger story of the Relief Society, and women’s work in general is usually an antenarrative to the work men do within an organization. These women were able to create a women’s organization that still exists because of their willingness to engage with and make visible those antenarrative experiences as important to the work of the larger organization.

Further, other antenarratives complicate our understanding of the Relief Society’s history and foundation. As we know, the Relief Society disbanded after Nauvoo and did not have public approval from

12. Julie Willis, “Gaining Light through Questioning” (devotional, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Rexburg, Idaho, July 1, 2014, available at <http://www.byui.edu/devotionals/julie-willis>).

13. Schneider, “Power as Interactional Accomplishment,” 188.

14. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 26.

Brigham Young until 1868.¹⁵ Yet, “[p]ublished accounts tell of the brief existence of local women’s organizations, formed in Utah wards in the 1850s . . . , [and] there was a profusion of women’s meetings at Winter Quarters in the spring of 1847 and again in the Salt Lake Valley from the fall of 1847 to the first months of 1848. Small groups of women met in private homes where they encouraged and blessed each other, often exercising such spiritual gifts as speaking in tongues.”¹⁶ The women, through their chosen social interactions, created a space for women to gather and speak outside of institutional approval. The antenarratives carried by women about the Relief Society meant that it got reorganized when it became defunct. From the small sewing circle that changed the larger organization, “the Relief Society operated cooperative stores, spun and wove silk fabric (including hatching the silkworms from eggs and feeding them on mulberry leaves that they gathered by hand), gleaned the fields to save grain for bad times, and trained as midwives and doctors.”¹⁷

3. “[P]articipants themselves orient to the context and design their interaction.”¹⁸

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich told of a time when she and her husband redesigned their traditional gender roles. She had grown up Mormon in Idaho with the assumption “that I would get married and have children.”¹⁹ However, when she was writing her dissertation early in

15. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 86.

16. Richard L. Jensen, “Forgotten Relief Societies, 1844–67,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 1 (1983): 106.

17. Claudia L. Bushman, “Should Mormon Women Speak Out? Thoughts on Our Place in the World,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 1 (2008): 179.

18. Schneider, “Power as Interactional Accomplishment,” 189.

19. James N. Kimball and Kent Miles, *Mormon Women: Portraits & Conversations* (Salt Lake City: Handcart Books, 2009), 91.

the morning and then taking a break to get her children off to school, she “would just be a crab. It would be like murder to come down and get their lunches ready and get them out the door. By then I was shot and I couldn’t go back to writing.”²⁰ She and her husband then designed their own interaction, based on her antenarrative experience of being grumpy. She shared her reality with him, and they worked out a plan, that “Gael was perfectly capable of making breakfast and getting them out to school.”²¹ They had oriented their marriage toward the gender roles expected of them by the Church and society. When it did not work, they made adjustments based on their antenarrative experiences of what it means to be married parents.

4. “[T]he deafening silence that meets many organizational decisions must also be seen as an interactional accomplishment.”²²

Chieko Okazaki is well known as first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency from 1990 to 1997 and as a speaker who broached difficult topics, such as sexual abuse, balancing work and family, blended families, homosexuality, and racism.²³ She remembers feeling as if she could not mention her questions about the gospel and racism when she lived in Utah as a young married woman. However, when she moved to Denver, she saw that people spoke more openly, so she did too. She remembered, “People always used to ask me, whenever I gave a talk, ‘How is it that you are able to do that?’ I said, ‘Well, it is the truth, isn’t it?’ ‘But how did you get away with doing that?’ I said, ‘I’m

20. Ibid., 97.

21. Ibid.

22. Schneider, “Power as Interactional Accomplishment,” 194.

23. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Beloved Mormon Women’s Leader Chieko Okazaki Dies,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Aug. 5, 2011, <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=52320992&itype=cmsid>.

not getting away with anything. I'm just saying what I think.”²⁴ Her experience demonstrates that the antenarratives in her speeches often were familiar to those who listened. Yet the people who admired her ability to speak out did not do so themselves. Their silence prevented more antenarratives from being voiced. Her bravery demonstrates the importance of speaking up and sharing antenarrative stories as a way of transforming conversations about difficult topics.

5. Power cannot be possessed, but it can be “accomplished through access to interactional resources that allow one to have one’s reality claims accepted.”²⁵

When we engage in the previous four ways of claiming power by voicing our antenarratives, we have more power and can change the institution and the culture, like Julie Willis, the Nauvoo Relief Society, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, and Chieko Okazaki. That said, interactional power for women tends to occur in a bit of a cycle within institutional settings, with a variety of outcomes depending on the person.²⁶ Women can first learn the conventions of an organization and decide to accept it. This constitutes agency but not a claim of power. Next, women who are dissatisfied with the master narrative of a community can resist expectations and slowly reform their personal situations.²⁷ Along the way, they may end up changing the organization in ways that ripple outward, but this sort of interactional power does not necessarily benefit others.

24. Gregory A. Prince, “‘There Is Always a Struggle’: An Interview with Chieko N. Okazaki,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 45, no. 1 (2012): 118.

25. Schneider, “Power as Interactional Accomplishment,” 196.

26. Emily January Petersen, “‘The ‘Reasonably Bright Girls’: Accessing Agency in the Technical Communication Workplace through Interactional Power,” *Technical Communication Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2019): 21–38.

27. Emily January Petersen, “Articulating Value Amid Persistent Misconceptions about Technical and Professional Communication in the Workplace,” *Technical Communication* 64, no. 3 (2017): 210–22.

Further, women within organizations may reject the organization completely. They may decide that asking for adjustments is not worth it; they might prefer to experience their lives without institutional participation or oversight. Additionally, women may enact power for themselves *and* choose to become an advocate or activist within their organization or outside of it.²⁸ They might start petitions, hold protests, write dossiers, speak with leaders, or file legal claims. These are active ways of engaging with power and often result in transforming the lives of many people.

A constant characteristic of power is that it cannot be possessed. "Understanding power as constructed in interaction also allows us to see why it is that power can slip away so easily. If . . . we understand it as an interactional accomplishment, we can see that it can never be accomplished once and for all."²⁹ This leaves room for constant maneuvering and reclaiming of power when faced with difficult situations. Such negotiations represent why recognizing and sharing antenarratives is crucial; they highlight the power women claim for themselves through stories that must be told and documented. "Language is a means of policy negotiation and of social transformation,"³⁰ and if we can highlight the antenarratives of many lives, we layer our voices and make "a far more powerful case."³¹

28. Emily January Petersen, "Female Practitioners' Advocacy and Activism: Using Technical Communication for Social Justice Goals," in *Citizenship and Advocacy in Technical Communication: Scholarly and Pedagogical Perspectives*, edited by Godwin Y. Agboka and Natalia Matveeva (New York: Routledge, 2018), 3–22.

29. Schneider, "Power as Interactional Accomplishment," 196.

30. Carolyn D. Rude, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Business and Technical Communication in the Public Sphere: Learning to Have Impact," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 22, no. 3 (2008): 267.

31. Kenneth J. Gergen, "Writing and Relationship in Academic Culture," in *Communicative Practices in Workplaces and the Professions: Cultural Perspectives on the Regulation of Discourse and Organizations*, edited by Mark Zachry and Charlotte Thralls (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood, 2007), 124.

Power structures are shaped by narratives, and narrative is a way of making meaning and constructing one's self.³² Because stories are told to persuade and to appeal to an audience, narratives serve to orient the distribution of power.³³ Antenarratives, on the other hand, can serve to disrupt dominant narratives and prevailing norms of power. Those in charge are not the only storytellers in an institution, and official master narratives are not always representative of individual experience and practice. One of the biggest "barriers that constrain women's ability to make full contributions" may be the visibility and acceptance of master narratives.³⁴ We must pay attention to the antenarratives, which highlight the stories of individuals and present the various and diverse ways in which identities and power are at work within cultures.

Antenarrative Fragments from LDS History

Antenarrative work is the work of recovery, and it allows those without voice or power to reemerge, thereby shifting the way we think about current and historical events, identities, and variations in culture. My own research on LDS women's history has revealed many interesting antenarratives, some of which may be familiar and others that might be new and challenging to dominant narratives. I overview some fragments from that research here as examples of seeking out the antenarrative and reclaiming narratives that empower various identities and ideologies that are typically marginalized. Certainly, these examples are not exhaustive, but instead they function as a way of highlighting the

32. Jane Perkins and Nancy Blyler, "Introduction: Taking a Narrative Turn in Professional Communication," in *Narrative and Professional Communication*, edited by Jane M. Perkins and Nancy Blyler (Stamford, Ct.: Ablex, 1999), 5.

33. *Ibid.*, 3.

34. Linda LaDuc and Amanda Goldrick-Jones, "The Critical Eye, the Gendered Lens, and 'Situated' Insights: Feminist Contributions to Professional Communication," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (1994): 250.

possibilities within antenarrative (especially those that disrupt power structures) and how we can seek out stories to complement the many ways in which women experience and enact LDS identity.

Antenarrative 1: Scenes from the Life of Virginia Hanson

In late 1940, Nellie Virginia Hanson (1907–1978), a young Mormon woman who lived all of her life in northern Utah, sought advice from the most important and influential women of her day. She wrote to them as part of a Utah State University project. Hanson was raised as a member of the Church, known to promote marriage and family for women. Although active socially according to her diaries, Hanson never married and spent her life as the proverbial spinster librarian of Cache County.

Hanson recorded her life meticulously and prolifically. The Utah State University library archives hold twelve of her diaries, files of her creative writing, and newspaper clippings highlighting her work in the community. In her files are a set of seven letters dated from late 1940 to early 1941 from Clare Boothe Luce (US ambassador), Margaret Sanger (birth control activist), Edna Ferber (Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist), Katharine Cornell (stage actress), Malvina Hoffman (sculptor), Elise Furer Musser (politician and social worker), and Eleanor Roosevelt (First Lady and diplomat). These women are representative of the many talents and pursuits of famous and public women in the 1930s and early 40s. They replied to Hanson's request for information, and in writing to these women, Hanson seemed to be searching for role models, as in 1939 she was taking college and library classes without a clear idea of what her future held. In an April 12, 1939 diary entry, Hanson wrote, "Good library class. Kirkpatrick suggested being librarian. Should I?"³⁵

35. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Apr. 12, 1939, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

The letters Hanson wrote to and received from these prominent women highlight some of the gendered difficulties of Hanson's life. In the 1930s, attitudes toward single female schoolteachers (which Hanson was for a time) often followed maternalist rhetoric, which claimed that "[w]omen's employment as teachers—that is, when women occupied themselves with instructing other people's children, whether in a home or in a school—was imagined as continuous with and related to the primary work of mothering." This reinforced the "ideology of maternal vocationalism . . . that what women teachers do 'comes naturally' and, like mothering, is an extension of the self and not work."³⁶ These ideas were accompanied by the fact that "single women educators and activists were targets of the campaign against spinsters, an implicitly anti-lesbian movement rooted in sexology. . . . Anti-spinsterism vilified single women teachers as narrow-minded, sexually 'thwarted' and even predatory."³⁷ While I have not uncovered any evidence of lesbianism being a factor in Hanson's experiences, she may still have suffered from or been aware of such vilification.

From Hanson's diaries, we learn that teaching was not necessarily the love of her life. On November 10, 1933, she wrote, "What a day at school! I'm becoming more of a shrew than Katherine" in reference to the film version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.³⁸ On March 13, 1935, she wrote, "Spring here all day I discovered when school was out and I was on parole from prison."³⁹ She was not especially fond of

36. Heather Julien, "School Novels, Women's Work, and Maternal Vocationalism," *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 2 (2007): 118.

37. Julien, "School Novels," 121.

38. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Nov. 10, 1933, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

39. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Mar. 13, 1935, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

her teaching job, although I suspect (based on the tone of her diaries) that some of these comments were good-natured humor. As Hanson grew older and realized that she would be employed for the rest of her life, she sought more education in order to be a librarian.

In a February 9, 1945 letter to a Mr. Stephens, who asked her to fill out a questionnaire about her teaching experiences, Hanson responded:

Perhaps I should start off by saying that the reason I stopped teaching school was to avoid having to fill out the kind of questionnaires you are now inflicting. . . . I taught for fifteen years in the state of Utah, and often in a state of rebellion. I liked teaching as teaching, was fond of my students, appreciated the new associations and experiences in various towns, but felt that I couldn't afford to do it as a pastime, at such shamefully low wages. I liked the teachers with whom I worked, but I was often distressed at the low mentality and lack of efficiency in many of the people who had positions of authority. While I was a principal, I met others of a similar position in the county, and thought that on the whole I had never met finer men, with higher ideals. But here and there are stupid, stubborn, hen-pecked men who are drunk with power. Five days a week they are able to lord it over their female underlings, and I for one, did not intend to leap at the crack of a whip in the hands of someone with even less intelligence than I possess. I went back to school, was handed a certificate proving that I could add a B.S. after my signature, and expected to get a promised position with more prestige and increased wages. The superintendent failed to keep his word. So I was happy to be offered a job in a library, which had long been a secret ambition. Here I can meet and assist children, and also enjoy the stimulating association of alert adults. I feel that I can do as much good here as I can in a schoolroom and am not treated like an ignorant serf.⁴⁰

As her letter reveals, she was witty and a bit angry about her teaching experiences; she highlighted the gender inequality associated with

40. Virginia Hanson, letter to Mr. Stephens, Feb. 9, 1945, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

being a female teacher and the freedom she found through more education and the profession of librarian. Because of her ambition and her keen awareness of gender inequality in the workplace of the school system, Hanson did more for herself than sit and take it.

Hanson's wit in these situations makes her diaries entertaining. Her 1933 diary begins: "If what we're doing when the new year begins is indicative of a year's activities, I shall lie in a hospital bed and read murder mysteries all of 1933."⁴¹ Hanson's appendix had been removed, and when the hospital offered her scalloped cabbage the next day for dinner, she called it the "world's champion nausea promoter."⁴² Later that year, on February 10, she reported a conversation with a doctor after having some blisters lacerated: "He says to keep off my feet. Good advice for the unemployed."⁴³ In addition, Hanson's archival files contain lists of riddles, party games, and magazine photos with sarcastic captions typed on them by Hanson, much in the style of today's *Catalog Living* satire blog.⁴⁴ Among Hanson's other letters are a series of exchanges with an eager suitor, whom she had never met and had no interest in seeing. She responded to his request for a date by claiming that she was ugly and "devoid of matrimonial inclinations."⁴⁵

41. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Jan. 1, 1933, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

42. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Jan. 2, 1933, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

43. Virginia Hanson, diary entry, Feb. 10, 1933, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

44. See *Catalog Living* (website), <http://catalogliving.net/>.

45. Virginia Hanson, letter to Stanley A. Reynolds, Mar. 21, 1946, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Hanson admired Clare Boothe Luce and Margaret Sanger. Boothe Luce's letter to Hanson is one of the shortest in the collection, but it contains one of the best pieces of advice. Boothe Luce said, of the biographies she had enclosed with the letter, that "I haven't the time to tell you which of the things said in these pieces are true and which are untrue. It doesn't matter anyhow—a person is what she is no matter what myth grows about her."⁴⁶ This line echoes the independence that Hanson may have seen in Boothe Luce from afar. While Boothe Luce lived a public life and may have been scrutinized for some of her choices (like divorces and extramarital affairs), it seems that Boothe Luce still knew who she was and had learned to ignore what the media must have said about her. She passed this on to Hanson, reminding her that it does not matter what others say and that independence is important. She rejected dominant, visible narratives and chose to focus on what she knew was true about her identity from antenarrative experiences.

In Hanson's letter to Sanger written as a play, she characterized herself as "Vociferous Virginia" who says, in response to "Apathetic Alice's" question of why Hanson would write to Sanger: "Because I have just read her autobiography, and am filled with admiration for Mrs. Sanger's spirit and courage and accomplishments. She is my idea of a wonderful woman crusader."⁴⁷ Hanson admired Sanger because of her willingness to oppose overriding cultural messages. Although Hanson had no obvious need for birth control, she still valued what Sanger offered to women. Hanson's letters and diaries are not explicit about her feminism, but her attitudes and writings suggest that she noticed and despised the inequalities between men and women and that she,

46. Clare Boothe Luce, letter to Virginia Hanson, Nov. 26, 1940, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

47. Virginia Hanson, "A Dilemma," letter to Margaret Sanger, date unknown, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

like Sanger, believed “that women’s liberation must include the ability for women to fully control their own destiny.”⁴⁸

Sanger wrote back, with the longest letter in Hanson’s collection. In it, on Birth Control Federation of America letterhead, she explained why she did not write back in time for Hanson’s school project but made up for it in three paragraphs of advice and a poem. The tone is serious, and the letter promotes the same rhetoric Sanger used publicly to advance her cause. But it also focuses on independence and encourages Hanson, and other young women, to be such. Sanger wrote, “Try to think straight and think things through yourselves. Do not try always to conform—always to follow the herd. It is not easy to be a pioneer in any field, but there is no greater joy than to fight for a great cause in which one believes heart and soul.”⁴⁹ This certainly advocates independence and bravery, two qualities Sanger had in abundance. She encouraged Hanson to embrace this independence to be pioneers for women. Given the elaborate thank you card and drawing Hanson sent back to Sanger, I feel confident in surmising that Hanson appreciated the letter. It certainly does what Hanson was seeking: gives advice on how to be a strong woman. It also highlights the way that Sanger promoted antenarratives about women’s identities and rejected master narratives about gender roles.

The antenarrative fragments of Virginia Hanson’s life, a story that has not been included in any official history and one that has no clear narrative arc, are valuable in multiple ways. Her experiences give us an idea of how women from the past dealt with difficult ideologies and circumstances. We can see how a single woman nearly one hundred

48. Wesley C. Buerkle, “From Women’s Liberation to Their Obligation: The Tensions Between Sexuality and Maternity in Early Birth Control Rhetoric,” *Women and Language* 31, no. 1 (2008): 28.

49. Margaret Sanger, letter to Virginia Hanson, Jan. 3, 1941, Virginia Hanson Papers, 1920–1978, Merrill-Cazier Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

years ago handled her life and thrived despite misconceptions and expectations from her community. It is a piece of a larger story, one that complicates narratives about Mormon women's thoughts, roles, lives, and identities.

Antenarrative 2: Organizing Motherhood in the Early Twentieth Century

Following a Mothers' Congress held in June and July of 1898 in Salt Lake City, former *Woman's Exponent* (1872–1914) editor Louisa Lula Greene Richards (1849–1944) wrote of her enthusiasm for organizing motherhood: "We mothers sometimes have much to grieve over in our children that might be avoided, if every household would form itself into a 'Mutual Improvement Association,' for the purpose of home education."⁵⁰ Her call resulted in a flurry of columns titled at first "Relief Society Mothers' Class," and then—when other branches began sending their curricula to the newspaper—standardized to "Mothers' Work." These columns represent the larger influence of the Progressive movement, which "specifically implied advances in the application of science to everyday life."⁵¹ Women of the era were concerned with domestic science, sanitation, health, and the proper training of children.

Relief Societies all over Utah and other outlying settlements organized what their children should be taught and sent the curricula to the *Woman's Exponent* for sharing. These outlined curricula were published over a seven-year period (roughly 1903–1909), serving as a way for each ward or branch to report and share ideas about mothering values in the workplace of the home. In essence, the Relief Society was organizing motherhood as an educative movement for women to streamline and disseminate how to practice being a mother. Mothers' Work columns are significant because the information was generated by a community

50. Lula L. Greene Richards, "We Mothers," *Woman's Exponent* 29, nos. 8–9, Sept. 15 and Oct. 1, 1900, 27.

51. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 159.

of women as user-experts. While a hallmark of “scientific motherhood” that women “needed to follow the directions of experts,”⁵² the Relief Society columns depended on the expertise of everyday mothering experience and practice from within the community. Cooperation is a key component of the way the curricula was enacted, and while many curricula in the *Exponent* have names attached to them, most of them are titled only by stake. Such documentation was a group endeavor, and while it occurred under the umbrella of the local Relief Society organizations, it included various women giving lectures and participating in discussion.

Similar to contemporary LDS parenting and republican motherhood in the late eighteenth century,⁵³ the overall goal in these curricula was to create good LDS members and good citizens. The women did this by encouraging activity within the Church community and programs. However, some interesting ideas emerge that may be surprising to those engaged in twenty-first-century parenting. First, the idea of broad motherhood and its connection to the larger world is a common theme. Nellie Little, president of the Utah Mothers Congress, said, “The true mother will consider the welfare, not only of her own child alone, but will be interested in improving the condition of all children in her locality.”⁵⁴ Moreover, the Snowflake Stake wrote, “Have we a special duty towards the naughty and disagreeable child and its mother in our neighborhood?”⁵⁵ This rhetorical question likely created lively

52. Rima D. Apple, “Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Social History of Medicine* 8, no. 2 (1995): 162.

53. Ed Ayers, Brian Balogh, and Peter Onuf, “Mommy Dearest: A History of American Motherhood (Rebroadcast),” *Backstory* (podcast), episode 21, May 9, 2014, <https://www.backstoryradio.org/shows/mommy-dearest/>.

54. Nellie Little, “The Mothers’ Congress,” *Woman’s Exponent* 29, no. 1, June 1, 1900, 7.

55. Amanda Peterson, Emma L. Smith, and Elsie O. Flake, “Mother’s Work: Snowflake Stake,” *Woman’s Exponent* 33, no. 7, Jan. 1905, 51.

discussions within that local Relief Society. Given that other curricula stress the importance of extending Mothers' Work to all children and to the larger world, the answer to that question was likely supposed to be "yes." One reason for this broader focus stemmed from the idea that being "moral caretakers of the family [meant] that they were also responsible for the morality of the wider community."⁵⁶

Most eloquently, Ida Smoot Dusenberry (1873–1955) detailed her vision of broad motherhood at the third annual Utah Mothers' Congress held on May 18, 1900 in Salt Lake City. She said,

Then there is but one kind of service that will answer the present needs of the human family and that is service for all the world. How are the mothers and women to assist in this struggle for a broader field of action if they are not awakened to the necessity of co-operation . . . What we want is mothers not alone in a physical sense, for this attribute we hold in common with the lower animals—but intellectual, broad-minded, spiritual, social mothers—mothers who are willing to meet bravely the world and battle with its difficulties . . . These are the kind of women we must have, but the kind we will never get until the women of the century are fully awakened to the importance of organization and co-operation. We must have broader-minded mothers. . . . We must, as mothers, mingle with the world; for it is the only way to develop that love for humanity which is character building.⁵⁷

Her speech highlights the public roles LDS women often played in the late nineteenth century, and she connected those roles to the duties of motherhood. She is promoting a vision of women as more than just mothers, as women who are educated, engaged in the community, and hardworking for the good of all, not just their own children. Similar admonitions for public work occur in the *Improvement Era* and

56. Amy Hoyt and Sara M. Patterson, "Mormon Masculinity: Changing Gender Expectations in the Era of Transition from Polygamy to Monogamy, 1890–1920," *Gender & History* 23, no. 1 (2011): 77.

57. Ida Smoot Dusenberry, "The Mothers' Congress," *Woman's Exponent* 29, no. 1, June 1, 1900, 7–8.

Ensign magazines: “articles published prior to the 1940s include explicit instruction for women to participate in the public sphere—to participate in formal education, to engage in wage labor, and to participate in politics.”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, there is a decline in the rhetoric of broad motherhood in the Mothers’ Work curricula over time.

Second, the women involved in writing and speaking about motherhood were not unaware of gendered tensions. E. E. Shepherd addressed the double standard of parenting and expectations for boys and girls: “How often we hear parents say, ‘Oh my boy is sowing his wild oats, he will come out all right.’ How would you like to have your daughters sow wild oats? A boy who sows his wild oats is never the equal of the pure young girl joined with him in marriage. What can we as Mothers’ Congress do to destroy this false standard?”⁵⁹ Ten years later at the general Relief Society meeting, future Relief Society general president Amy Brown Lyman said, “this Church had always taught equal purity in men and women a fact to which the world was but just awakening.”⁶⁰ These women were aware of the contradictory messages about gender taught to children and wished to address it from a parenting perspective. They saw that “[w]omen were often charged with carrying the moral responsibilities of society.”⁶¹

These antenarratives—of promoting broad community-minded motherhood and calling out unequal ideas about gender and responsibility—give us a greater sense of the multiple attitudes, layers, and expectations surrounding motherhood. It is easiest to characterize historical communities as having coalesced around one idea about a

58. Laura Vance, “Evolution of Ideals for Women in Mormon Periodicals, 1897–1999,” *Sociology of Religion* 63, no. 1 (2002): 100.

59. E. E. Shepherd, “The Mothers’ Congress,” *Woman’s Exponent* 29, nos. 2–3, June 15 and July 1, 1900, 15.

60. Amy Brown Lyman, “General Relief Society Conference: Afternoon Session,” *Woman’s Exponent* 39, no. 1, June 1910, 7.

61. Hoyt and Patterson, “Mormon Masculinity,” 83.

certain topic, like motherhood, or to point to history as a way of maintaining the status quo for women. These narratives show us the dialogic, antenarrative conversations that were occurring then and that influence and inform the way we think about gender roles now.

Antenarrative 3: Rhetorics of Womanhood in the 1970s

One of the most visible antenarrative outlets in contrast to official narratives from the *Ensign* is the *Exponent II* magazine, which was started by feminist Mormon women in Boston in 1974. It takes its name from the *Woman's Exponent* (a newspaper run solely by Mormon women in Salt Lake City, Utah, from 1872 to 1914), which none of the Boston women knew about until they found old copies of it in a library. They decided to restart it as a way to give Mormon women their own place for sharing their voices, as the *Relief Society Magazine*, which had replaced the *Woman's Exponent* and had been controlled by Church headquarters, had been canceled at the January 1971 inception of the *Ensign*, meant as a magazine for all members.

In the 1970s, there are clear antenarratives that challenge power structures' ideas about women. These antenarratives from the *Exponent II* promoted difference and community support, while including voices that were unsure or ambivalent about social changes for women. While not necessarily in conflict with the *Ensign*, the rhetorics of the *Exponent II* were nuanced and took into account different forms of womanhood as additive to the culture rather than threatening. Patricia Rasmussen Eaton-Gadsby summed it up: "*all* mothers are different. And different does not mean second best or inferior."⁶²

The personal story of Elizabeth Hammond, a doctor and working mother, was included in an early issue of *Exponent II* as an example of a different way of mothering. She described her parenting as a

62. Patricia Rasmussen Eaton-Gadsby, "On Being a Stepmother," *Exponent II* 2, no. 1 (1975): 9.

negotiation for both her and her husband in terms of childcare, "but neither of them has felt that quitting their jobs would solve any problems. However, they have decided that family life is their top priority."⁶³ From this nuanced account of Hammond's experiences, female readers saw a role model of what a Mormon working mother might look like. It is clear that family life is the ultimate good within the Mormon context, but Hammond expressed her frustration over the fact that in Church lessons "working women are either ignored . . . or used as bad examples."⁶⁴ She explained how this hurt her and prompted her to rely on her personal relationship with God. The rhetoric of this article suggests that she was following Church counsel and guidance in terms of seeking personal confirmation for her decisions while pointing out problematic judgment from others. Her story is an antenarrative to the ones we often hear about mothers and work, especially in the context of this article's printing, during the second-wave feminist movement. Continuing the antenarrative, Carolyn W. Zaugg suggested that the rhetoric of sacrifice for children and husbands creates guilt and ambivalence. She wrote, "Our exciting responsibility as mothers is to bring our individual interests with us to our homes, instead of leaving them behind in our lives before the marriage altar."⁶⁵ Another woman shared the valuable advice she had received: "Remember, unused talent is the most crippling of all diseases."⁶⁶ These women recognized the importance of women having identities for themselves as they occupy other roles.

Furthermore, the rhetoric of sisterhood in the magazine attempted to be inclusive. While the *Ensign* focused on one type of motherhood (which can be characterized as white, American, and middle-class),

63. Judith R. Dushku, "A Working Mother," *Exponent II* 1, no. 3 (1974): 3.

64. Ibid.

65. Carolyn W. Zaugg, "A Mother's Day Talk," *Exponent II* 2, no. 4 (1976): 16.

66. Mary L. Bradford, "In Process," *Exponent II* 6, no. 1 (1979): 5.

the *Exponent II* highlighted women from differing circumstances and from around the world, including the Ivory Coast, Finland, France, and Nepal. Another feature article was dedicated to interviews with older women, framed with the idea that “we are rich in mature women who have made solid contributions to Church, community, and country.”⁶⁷ Moreover, an article dedicated to black women and the priesthood concluded, “As a renewed sisterhood grows up around these black women, it will help bind all Mormon sisters together.”⁶⁸ This may not be a perfect discussion of race and the Church, but it reflects the focus on sisterhood and inclusivity that characterizes the rhetorics of the *Exponent II*. Articles were also dedicated to depression, infertility, and foster parenting. The *Exponent II* tempered rigid identity expectations with the knowledge that everybody deserves love and acceptance, even if they do not necessarily fit the prescribed norms of the community.

At the end of each 1970s issue, the “Sisters Speak” section, in which readers shared their opinions and stories, allowed for a multiplicity of voices and experiences that created wide-ranging discussions of what it meant to be a Mormon woman. The magazine embodied the idea that female knowledge and experience is valuable and authoritative, recognizing that those who are not typically in power have valuable knowledge, perhaps more authentic and better knowledge than those at the top. There is no need for a hierarchy to share information with subordinates on the subject of motherhood. The women participating in the community of *Exponent II* were sharing laterally with each other as a way of creating sisterhood and connection based on actual experience. The rhetoric of sisterhood recognizes that they, the women of the community, are the experts.

The magazine’s antenarrative attempts to counter dominant narratives in 1970s Mormonism made it clear that “there must be innumerable

67. “Conversations with Senior Women,” *Exponent II* 3, no. 1 (1976): 4.

68. Chris Rigby Arrington, “Blacks, Priesthood and Sisterhood,” *Exponent II* 5, no. 1 (1978): 4.

ways a woman can fulfill her 'purpose' here,"⁶⁹ affirming that women's identities are flexible and varied. The magazine engaged with its readers intersectionally and ultimately promoted sisterhood through an ethic of care. Not only can we benefit from these versions of womanhood from the 1970s, but we can appreciate the entire purpose of the *Exponent II* magazine, which is to seek out, publish, and share antenarratives in service of women. Further, the antenarratives of the *Exponent II* magazine challenge power structures. In engaging in interactional power through antenarratives, the women who published *Exponent II* risked censure but also contributed to shifts in individual lives. Some four thousand women subscribed to *Exponent II* in the 1970s, meaning that its reach was small and definitely on the margins, making it an antenarrative to the dominant messages of the time published in the *Ensign*.

Conclusion

These fragmented voices and stories represent antenarratives of women's experiences from specific contexts and time periods. They are meant to demonstrate how antenarratives and interactional power through language and action can operate when we tell stories that represent lived experience and therefore authority. We all have antenarratives to speak. We can share them from our everyday experiences. We can dig them up from our family histories. We can listen to what others are telling us about their experiences and acknowledge difference as normal. We need to "identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference."⁷⁰

While institutions wield official power and control dominant narratives, antenarrative fragments available to us through historical archives, our personal lives, and through connections on social media

69. Ibid., 17.

70. Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 123.

can shift power dynamics and reclaim space for different experiences and stories. When women speak up and share their stories, making visible antenarratives based on personal experience and individual nuance, the power available to them can shift, allowing for multiplicity and dialogue that strengthens communities, creates connections, and disrupts master narratives, ultimately freeing all of us for authentic engagement within the group that represents who we are, how we live, what we have to say, and the agency we were born to enact. That said, I do not present these sample antenarrative fragments and the theories of interactional power as perfect solutions to women's lack of power within institutions. I do not even present them as a solution but instead as one of many ways to act. Antenarrative and interactional power give us ways to engage and language for engaging.

EMILY JANUARY PETERSEN {januarypetersen@gmail.com} is an assistant professor in the English department at Weber State University, where she teaches technical communication, literature, critical theory, and rhetoric courses. She is the director of the professional and technical writing program and has published some sixteen peer-reviewed research articles. She has received many awards, including an honorable mention for outstanding dissertation from the CCCC and a Presidential Excellence in Teaching award. Her research focuses on professional identities from a feminist perspective, examining how women document their work technologically, historically, professionally, and extra-institutionally. She has conducted research in the United States, Botswana, India, and South Africa and worked as a research specialist for *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women*. She is currently working on a memoir about growing up in the Church with a gay father.

THE BLESSING I TOOK

Lindsay Denton

I never wanted a son.

I feel the heavy ugliness of those words like rough stones in my hands, taste them like shame on my tongue. Children have always been alien creatures to me, even when I was a child myself, and boy children, especially, have proven foreign and unrelatable. Beyond the stereotypes of short attention spans and impulsive violence and general unwieldiness, I felt an added uneasiness shrouding the potentiality of bearing a son someday like a layer of fine spiderwebs, an uneasiness that I would resent him for the privilege he would inherit, particularly in the Church. Opportunities and experiences I had secretly longed for would be handed to him when he was still a child, his maleness the only real cost of admission, and I harbored a deep insecurity that he would gradually lose respect for me when he realized his place relative to mine in the institutional hierarchy, his eagerness for my opinion slowly ebbing like the tide going out.



I found out I was pregnant when what I thought was the three-day flu I'd caught from my husband lasted for two weeks. When I learned my baby was a boy, I wrestled with the idea of him and, sometimes, literally wrestled his body with my hands when his elbows or bottom protruded at uncomfortable angles, playing a game of abdominal whack-a-mole. As the fog of malaise finally lifted a few weeks after I entered my second trimester, I tried to consciously create space for my son in my heart and my future the way my body was creating space for him in my womb, but I couldn't wrap my mind around him, couldn't claw my way through the smooth cocoon of denial that enveloped me.

After our son was born, we settled into the familiar grind of the newborn routine. It always takes me by surprise, the bond I form with my children, but this time, especially, the fierceness of the love I felt for my son was completely unexpected. It was a relief that this most basic of evolutionary developments had been activated in my DNA, as though all of the foremothers I carried in my genetic code had turned a key and wrought this miracle.



When my daughters were blessed in church, two and four and a half years before, they each wore the long lacy gown I'd been blessed in as a baby. My husband had carried them to the front of the chapel, accompanied by a suited coterie of friends and family members who encircled our baby in a formal but welcoming embrace. A small part of me would have liked to be part of that sacred circle, but I was content to allow my husband this special moment with our babies.

But as I envisioned my son's future milestones in my mind—being baptized at eight, ordained at twelve, increasing in priesthood office through his teens, set apart to be a missionary—I saw myself on the periphery: an observer, supportive but mute, while my husband and other men pronounced blessings and bestowed keys.

My son's baby blessing was the one chance I had to physically be with him—central, united—for an ordinance milestone. I can't fully explain why holding my son during his blessing was suddenly so important to me, why I felt such a deep and driving need to be more than just an observer and claim my authority as his mother, but the idea grew roots and branches and I felt in my bones that my son and I were to experience this ritual as we had weathered his birth: together.

When our son was two weeks old, my husband called our bishop to schedule the blessing in our home and to clear my plans to hold my son during the blessing. I looked up baby blessing guidelines in the Church handbook and read that "only Melchizedek Priesthood holders

may participate in naming and blessing children,”¹ but I would not be participating in the way the men were, hand to shoulder, channeling power and priesthood through a completed circuit. I would merely be a chair, a lightning rod at the circle’s center. Passive furniture, not active participant. The handbook also stated that “leaders should make every reasonable effort to avoid embarrassment or offense to individuals or families,”² and I could think of nothing more reasonable than granting a mother’s request to hold her infant while he was blessed in their home.

I listened to my husband’s half of the conversation as he spoke with the bishop on the phone, heard the silence on both ends of the line when my husband said, “Lindsay wants to hold the baby during the blessing.”

“Because she wants to be part of it. Because it’s meaningful to her.”

“She doesn’t think she holds the priesthood. No, she won’t speak or participate in the actual blessing.”

“Because she wants this to be something we do together.”

After several minutes of repeating himself, my husband hung up the phone and turned to me. “The bishop was completely bewildered as to why you’d want to, and he’s never heard of anyone doing it before, but he finally said he could not think of a reason you couldn’t hold the baby.”

I was nursing my son in the rocking chair in our room, and I clasped his small body more tightly to my chest to stop the shaking in my hands as I came down from a confrontation-by-proxy-fueled adrenaline high. I felt relieved but also somewhat upset at the line of invasive and insulting questioning my husband had endured on my behalf. It seemed such a small, benign request, the tiniest adjustment to the status quo, but even the asking was perceived as a threat.

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 20.2.1, available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/handbook-2-administering-the-church/priesthood-ordinances-and-blessings/priesthood-ordinances-and-blessings?lang=eng#title_number9.

2. *Ibid.*

The bishop called my husband the next day and told him he'd changed his mind, that he'd read through the handbook and determined that my holding my son would qualify as "participating" in the blessing.

We decided to put the blessing plans on hold.



Two months later, we got a new bishop. I was still raw from our previous attempt to schedule the baby blessing, so I didn't broach the topic again until my son was five months old. With my husband's support, I decided that this time, we would not ask permission. I would never again put myself in the position of asking for permission to perform an act that was mine by right and place a man between me and my own authority.

After sacrament meeting on the day of the blessing, I approached the counselor from the bishopric who would be attending the ordinance at our home that evening. I thanked him for taking time to join us, told him what time we'd be expecting him and who would be in attendance, and then said, "And just so you're aware, I'll be holding my son during his blessing."

"You can't do that," he said. His response was immediate, a reflex.

I drew a deep, silent breath and felt for the slim iron rod of resolve I'd cast over months of thought and prayer. "I'm not asking," I told him, my tone amicable but firm. "I'm telling you that this is what I'm going to do. If you're uncomfortable and would rather not participate, we'll do it on our own."

"We can't have you doing that, either," he said, and beyond his indulgent half-smile, I saw the flicker of panic in his eyes, the shifting of his body slightly back from mine, the incline of his chin.

"I will not ask for permission to hold my own child," I told him. "I am claiming my authority as my son's mother."

As we went back and forth, I marveled at the authority in my voice, the calm of my demeanor, the lack of contention. The encounter was awkward in the way that all disagreements are awkward, and it was

uncomfortable to fight my conditioning to acquiesce to Church leaders, but I had none of the distress I normally experienced when an authority figure told me no. The peace I felt was cool water for my budding testimony that these men only had the power over me that I chose to give them.

Finally, the counselor said he understood where I was coming from but wanted to run things past the bishop, who was out of town. I said that would be fine and reiterated that since a baby blessing is not a saving ordinance, I had no problem with keeping our son's blessing a family affair and not having it recorded on Church records.

Later that afternoon as we ate dinner with our guests, the bishop left me a voicemail. He said he'd called the stake president who then called the Area Seventy, and all three of them agreed that I could not hold my baby while he was blessed. He said we could proceed with the blessing in the prescribed manner or we could reschedule it for a different time. A moment from my conversation with the bishopric member earlier that day surfaced in my mind: when I had explained my understanding of the handbook's guidelines, he had said, "But it just isn't done this way." "Why?" I'd countered. "Do you think that my touch will invalidate the blessing?" He had said "Of course not" and spluttered at the ridiculousness of such an idea, but now I found myself wondering whether my question had been so ridiculous after all. What other reason could men or God possibly have for not allowing a mother to hold her baby while a blessing was given?

I texted my bishop and thanked him for going up the chain for me. I asked him to contact the counselor and inform him that we wouldn't need him to come by after all.

We blessed our son in our home as planned with our fathers and my husband's uncle and cousin participating and our mothers, my grandmother, and my husband's aunt unofficial witnesses. I, somewhere in the space between participant and witness, held my son in the center of the circle.

Because I touched his skin, held his body while he was blessed, the Church does not recognize my son's blessing as valid.



I wish that I could report that the experience of standing up to authority and holding my son during his blessing was empowering, that I felt strong and victorious while playing this smallest of roles in my son's ordinance. The truth, though, is that it was awkward: advocating for myself with my bishopric was violating and uncomfortable, my husband's uncle challenged our holding the blessing without a member of the bishopric present, and I didn't know exactly how to hold my baby to allow access to the men blessing him, so their hands perched awkwardly on his small head, their arms positioned directly in front of my face. My husband was flustered by the change in procedure, and he fumbled over the words he'd rehearsed, his speech flowing faster than his brain could finish forming the sentences. My stomach was in knots all that afternoon and long into the evening after our guests had left, and I shook with my own audaciousness, the hugeness of openly defying the men to whom I'd unquestioningly given a lifetime of obedience.

The next day, I woke up feeling sick that things hadn't gone as smoothly as I'd hoped and guilty for not telling our family members that the blessing was unauthorized. In an ideal situation, I would have explained. I would have gotten informed consent before making anyone party to an off-the-books ordinance. But we found out so shortly before we were scheduled to begin, and I was exhausted, barely able to balance my own anxieties about the broken protocols and incapable of stacking borrowed insecurities on top of my already teetering load.



When boys in the Church are given new stewardships and responsibilities, they are provided with instruction, mentoring, and training. There

is skyscraper-sized scaffolding built around boys and their roles and development: there are entire sections of scripture and temple liturgy that teach them what it means to hold the priesthood, what their spiritual and hierarchical progression looks like, even what some of their future responsibilities as gods will entail. Boys receive detailed instructions in handbooks and pamphlets and manuals spelling out everything from how to perform and where to put hands during each ordinance to how to dedicate a grave and properly consecrate oil. There are also unofficial responsibilities given to boys to groom them for leadership from an early age: the rotation of deacons who sit on the stand next to the bishopric as the “bishop’s messenger” during sacrament meeting each week, the eleven- to fifteen-year-old boys who pass the sacrament despite the scriptures specifying that only priests are to administer it, the young men who are assigned to be ushers during stake conferences and guard the doors during the sacrament, the priests whose class meets in the bishop’s office, very often with the bishop himself in attendance. There is none of this scaffolding or leadership grooming in place for girls. Specifics about women’s roles in the church and in the eternities are nearly completely absent from scripture and temple scripts. Girls are not trained how to perform ordinances, are not given authority, are not mentored to lead adults and mixed-gender groups, are not provided with standardized institutional opportunities to serve the entire congregation in visible, meaningful ways.

How, then, are women to claim authority in the Mormon context? I know several women who have agitated for and been granted permission to hold their babies during blessings or have written and read their own blessing for their child. Other women participate in blessings of comfort or healing with their husbands by laying their hands with his on their children’s heads. Though it now operates mostly underground, there is a long tradition of Mormon women blessing each other, and I have stood in those circles and received instruction from other women about where to place my hands, what to say in the absence of a

priesthood script, how to claim access to inspiration and God's power. When a woman sets out to perform any of these small but vital deeds, enacted with shards of authority chipped from the jealously guarded territory of the priesthood, each subversive act is a grain of rice that tips the scales the slightest bit closer from "taboo" to "normal." Like me, most women who venture beyond the borders of commonly accepted practices experience uncertainty and insecurity akin to performing a dance without having been taught the steps.

This willingness to embrace awkwardness is what differentiates the trailblazers from those who come after and walk in their footsteps, what separates the improvisers from the rulebook followers, what divides the demonstrators from the couch sitters. It is both the cost and the reward of forging new paths that others may follow.



My son is nearly three now. He has thick tangerine-colored hair, bright blue eyes, an impish grin, the roundest cheeks. I still worry about raising a boy, worry that he won't recognize his privilege or use his influence to help the marginalized, worry about the difference in opportunity between him and my daughters in the Church. But the tide is coming in, and with it, an armada of women ready to claim their own authority, trusting that the power of God is as abundant as seashells scattered on the shore.

LINDSAY DENTON {lindsdenton@gmail.com} holds a BS from Brigham Young University in communication disorders and an MA from Our Lady of the Lake University in speech-language pathology. Her writing has been featured in the *Exponent II* magazine, the *Exponent* blog, Mormon Lit Blitz, *Segullah*, and in the poetry anthology *We Hold Your Name: Mormon Women Bless Mormons Facing Exile*, a volume she also helped edit. Lindsay works as a speech-language pathologist in Las Vegas, where she lives with her husband and three children.

FAITH AND POWER OF AN UNBROKEN WOMAN

Joy Sitawa Richards

I am outside running, playing, and dancing to musical beats from our neighbor's house. It is a bright sunny day, and, just as on other beautiful days, I am on top of the world, where the wide expanse of the earth is all mine. My arms spread out, eyes closed, a big smile on my face, and feet firmly planted on mother earth, I am swaying to the melodious music. Suddenly I feel a gentle shake, but I struggle to open my eyes, not wanting to break the beautiful spell. I feel another shake, followed by a soft voice calling my name. With great difficulty I open my eyes halfway and see my sister standing by my bedside, waking me up for scripture reading. I slowly drag myself out of bed. The air around me is chilly, so I pull the blanket tightly around me as I half-sleep and half-stumble to the living room. We all gather around and take turns reading scriptures. As we continue reading and my sister and brother-in-law—my guardians—explain the scriptures to us and relate them to our lives, a warm feeling spreads from my heart to the rest of my body. Looking back at those experiences, I realize now that they planted a seed in my heart. The good word of God planted and nourished an acorn of faith that would grow into an oak tree.

An oak tree can grow nine feet in diameter, with branches reaching up to 135 feet in length. Its root system almost mirrors its height, growing as deep as the tree is high. They have the capacity to withstand incredibly strong winds and storms: even when stripped of their leaves, oak trees survive because of their strength, curvy branches, and their incredible root system. An oak tree also adapts to different conditions, growing easily where there is sunlight, nourishment, water, and space.

Love from my family was like sunlight to me. The many opportunities I had to serve at home, church, and school nourished me. I grew strong, well-prepared, and ready for life's challenges. My roots grew deeper and my branches reached out wider. I felt a purpose in my life, and I had a relationship with Jesus Christ. I understood that Christ served without any prejudice, as no respecter of people. He embraced all who came unto him. Spiritual empowerment lifts us from our lowly states to the top of the highest branches, where we bask in the Savior's love and draw strength from his word. All of this gave me power, so that when the storms of life happened to me, even though my leaves were stripped away, I was still able to stand and move forward with confidence.

When the time came for me to leave the protection of my loving family, I walked right through life's door to a new beginning. Their love was a great source of courage, and so as I walked, I felt the gentle breeze on my face, excited about what life had in store for me. Even though I was far from my family, I still felt their love for me as they continued supporting and praying for me. I also felt the love of my Heavenly Father as he guided and protected me.

In my new beginning, I married someone from another country and moved far away from my own family. Knowing the power of service, I quickly got involved in the Church and labored in the Lord's vineyard, helping the Church grow. Two years later, when clouds started gathering and the sky grew dark, the gospel was my main source of strength. The early days of my marriage were happy, but things changed after my son was born. My husband expected me to stay home and take care of my baby. It was a good idea, but this frightened me because I was the breadwinner in the home and there was no other source of income. I prayed to Heavenly Father to know what I should do, but the answer was the same prayer after prayer: that I should go back to work. My husband wasn't happy with my decision, but I prayed and hoped that his feelings would change. Things did not improve, and when my son was

nine months old, my husband started demanding that we have another baby. He argued that a woman's place was in the home taking care of the home and children, not working outside the home. He quoted Ephesians 5:22–23, which says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.” He demanded full submission from me. He restricted me from talking to other people and became verbally abusive. When my son was two years old, I decided to try for another baby, hoping that this would help lessen the verbal abuse, which was reaching a breaking point. A year later, I had a beautiful little girl, but instead of finding relief, the problems at home compounded. The baby cried nonstop, seemingly for no reason. I found out later that she cried because she was unable to breathe through her nose, but she was too small for the surgery that could alleviate the problem. With a toddler, an endlessly screaming baby, and a husband who continued to heap abuse on my head, my mental health quickly deteriorated.

Having another baby did not change the state of things at home. My children's father had very little interest in them. He started coming home very late, then after a while he started spending nights away from home. Most painfully, he started criticizing my body and comparing me to his young female college classmates. I think this hurt the most because of the insensitivity to what pregnancy and bearing children had done to my body. I endured both emotional and psychological abuse. It was hard, but I felt that I had to endure all for the sake of my children.

The verbal abuse I endured whenever he was home started to wear me out and break me down. He never missed an opportunity to remind me how stupid I was, and, unfortunately, I started believing his words and questioning my intelligence and mental state. I lost confidence and blamed myself for what was happening to me. During all this, I prayed fervently for a window of calm, but the storm raged on in different forms: verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and psychological abuse. Unfortunately, my little children were also caught in this

dangerous, cyclone-like storm. They too endured verbal and physical abuse, in most cases over nothing. The gusts of wind hurled against me, stretching me further than I thought I could endure. The only respite we got was when I was at work and my children at school. Going home after work always terrified me, but I had to be there to protect my children.

On two occasions we had to run for our lives, and we stayed with dear friends who were willing to take us in. During those times my son would unconsciously take on the responsibilities of looking out for his little sister and vigilantly watch out for her, lest their father show up at school to take them away. I was only aware of the huge burden my son carried when he asked me for some extra change, just in case they needed to run away from their father. After these times of leaving, we always ended up going back home.

In August 2006, one moment changed everything. It was not the calm of the storm but an extreme surge, an experience of abuse worse than anything that had come before. My husband grabbed me so fast and unexpectedly that I didn't have time to jump off the bed and out of his reach. He straddled me, pinned my body down, and started strangling me. I struggled to get out of his grip, but his 250-pound body held me down. His legs held my lower body in place, and he grinned as he tightly wrapped his hands around my neck. The more I struggled, the more he tightened the grip. Any attempts to free myself did nothing but drain all the energy from my body. The tight grip constricted my windpipe, making it hard for me to breathe. My eyes wide with pure terror, my heart pounding, my veins bulging and making my head feel like it was going to explode, I thought that I might die and no longer be able to protect my children. All I could do was pray that I would get out from under him alive. I was at a point where I had no energy to struggle—all previous attempts had yielded nothing but more pain and tighter strangulation. Praying was all I could do; it was the only powerful weapon I had in that situation. It was the only thing he could not

stop me from doing, and as that thought came to me, I knew that not all was lost. With hope and gratitude in my heart, I fervently prayed that I might live to raise my children. It was at that time that I felt peace in my heart, then heard a quiet voice telling me to relax. As I trusted that voice and ceased struggling, he slowly loosened the grip, then finally let go of me. He had an air of mission-accomplished about him; it was victory. He did not understand that having power over my body did not mean having power over my mind, heart, and soul. He could not stop me from praying to my God, who had literally saved my life in that moment.

It was this event that made me realize that nothing was going to change and that I had to find a way to remove myself and my children before something worse happened. I spent the rest of the night in my children's room with all the furniture pushed against the door, just in case he tried to come after us. We didn't sleep that night.

The next day we sought refuge at our bishop's home. I knew that a long, rough road lay ahead of us and I knew that we were not completely out of danger. But I also knew that Heavenly Father would see us through it all. I could now see light at the end of the tunnel. It did not matter that my children and I had nothing but the clothes on our backs—what mattered was that we were together. The love that bound us together and the will to live as free people drove our resolve and empowered us. With determination we looked forward to a new beginning, out of his controlling grasp. Of course, he did not give up on his quest to break us. He stalked me, threatened me with legal action, and finally resorted to verbal abuse and threats of physical harm. But there was no stopping us from getting our freedom. I knew at that point that living in that country was not an option for me and my children anymore.

The next period of my life was hard. I left my children with my sister and came to the United States for studies. Many were skeptical about how I was going to make it financially, but I had a mustard seed

of faith on which I could rely. I did not doubt that the Lord would make a way for us. I was a giant oak tree, planted by the love of my family and nourished by the word of God. I knew the words of Matthew 17:20: “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” This scripture is the definition of power. By faith I went to a two-year college, then a four-year college, and finally graduated from graduate school. During that time, the Lord guided me, and good people sustained me. These earthly angels in my life helped me reunite with my children after being apart for five years. Through the Lord’s help, I was able to overcome the great hurricane of my life.

Irrespective of our circumstances or background, we all face different challenges at different times in our life’s journey, but we have all been endowed with amazing abilities, capabilities, and strength beyond what we can ever imagine. And so was my life’s journey: though battered and bruised, like the oak tree I stood, and over the years, everything sprang back into place with renewed energy, ready for new growth, empowered by the experiences of faith and power of an unbroken woman.

JOY SITAWA RICHARDS {sitawaj@gmail.com} holds an MPA from BYU Marriott School of Business with an emphasis in human resources. She is a high-performing, self-motivated, hardworking human resources professional. Joy is fluent in Swahili and enjoys teaching Swahili at the BYU Center for Language Studies. She is also the language coordinator for the Swahili team that does interpretation for LDS general conferences. Joy lives in Utah and outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her spouse, children, and grandchildren, as well as writing short stories and poems, reading, listening to music, running, hiking, and camping.

THE STORIES WE TELL—AND WHAT THEY TELL US

Heather Sundahl

“I will tell you something about stories. . . . They aren’t just for entertainment. Don’t be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness or death. You don’t have anything if you don’t have stories.”

—Leslie Marmon Silko¹

Stories Matter

Stories are a binding force in families,² a fact Mormons have known for a long time. A study at Emory University tried to identify what could strengthen families and help kids be more resilient. Their conclusion: “The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative.”³ They created a questionnaire that tested kids on their knowledge of their families. Examples included: Do you know where your grandparents grew up? Do you know where your parents met? Do you know an illness or something really terrible that happened in your family? Do you

1. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Viking, 1977), 2.

2. Bruce Feiler, “The Stories That Bind Us,” *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html>. The article is adapted from Bruce Feiler, *The Secrets of Happy Families: How to Improve Your Morning, Rethink Family Dinner, Fight Smart, Go Out and Play, and Much More* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).

3. Ibid.

know the story of your birth?⁴ The researchers also gave their subjects extensive psychological tests to gauge their emotional stability and resilience. What they found was that the more children knew about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem, and the more they believed their families functioned successfully. The "Do You Know?" scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children's emotional health and happiness.⁵

We all need to see ourselves as part of something bigger. We all need to be part of larger stories where we see that trials and problems are part of life, but that, ultimately, we will endure and triumph. The researchers at Emory University concluded that happy families were not the ones who had the fewest problems but the ones who talked about their challenges and found "positive stories" to tell. In his summary of this research, Bruce Feiler writes: "When faced with a challenge, happy families, like happy people, just add a new chapter to their life story that shows them overcoming the hardship. . . . The bottom line: if you want a happier family, create, refine and retell the story of your family's positive moments and your ability to bounce back from the difficult ones. That act alone may increase the odds that your family will thrive for many generations to come."⁶ A beautiful example of this is Mother Eve's response to leaving the garden. Instead of cursing Satan or pining for paradise, Eve, like the happy families that Feiler studied, knows that they will bounce back: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.”⁷ These family narratives of faith teach us that we are all part of something bigger.

When you and your family of origin get together, what stories are told? Is there a theme? What is your role in these stories? Which, if any, of these stories do you tell your friends or your kids? Do these stories serve you well? Do you like the character you are supposed to be when you are with your family? Or do they keep you from growth and change? What part have these stories played in defining you and your family? What have you embraced? What have you rejected?

Choosing the Story

I was a sassy little girl. One of my early memories is of our across-the-street neighbor Helen Williams saying, “That Heather—you never know what will come out of her mouth.” But it’s not actually my memory. It’s just something my mother has repeated to me so often that I have appropriated it and can even visualize Mrs. Williams saying this as she prunes her pink roses. And over the years I have often had things fly out of my mouth that should have stayed in, like the time I said to a pregnant woman in the ward, “Oh! You’re having a boy.” She was surprised and asked how I knew. I replied: “It’s the sideburns you’re growing.” That story about Helen Williams has often given me permission to say things I shouldn’t have.

The stories we use to encase memories shape and make connections and give meaning to our memories. In a popular TED talk given in 2010, psychologist Daniel Kahneman explained that our “remembering self captures three seconds of reality” before we either discard

7. Moses 5:11–12.

or claim those memories by endowing them with explanation.⁸ This is why two people can witness the same event and experience it very differently. In short, our memories are what we make them. We can't control the events of our lives, but we shape and mold them and draw conclusions that make up our story. We may not create the plot or the characters, but we certainly decide the theme.

This concept is exemplified by my grandfather, Oscar McFarland. Like Rumpelstiltskin, he could take events made of straw and turn them into gold. In fact, sometimes his optimism drove me nuts—I remember rolling my eyes at the way he looked at his life through rose-colored glasses. So let me relay to you his life in two ways and you can decide which story is more true.

Oscar from the outside: Oscar married Jessie in 1930. She had rheumatoid arthritis, so he left a promising cattle business in West Weber, Utah, for no job in Southern California during the Depression with two kids (and three more to follow). He got a job as milkman and they always scraped by. Jessie died in 1970 just as Oscar was called as stake patriarch. A visiting General Authority told him to remarry quickly. Unfortunately, he married a cruel woman who caused ten years of misery for the family. Eventually, they divorced, Oscar was released as patriarch, and his temple recommend was taken away as a result. It was a terrible time for him. A few years later he met Johanna Schneider. She joined the Church and they were married. She loved all of Oscar's large LDS family. Oscar was reinstated as a patriarch, and Oscar and Johanna lived out their years together happily.

Oscar on Oscar: "It was hard to leave the farm, but I had faith and got a great job when others had none (I was still working with cattle,

8. Daniel Kahneman, "The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory," filmed Feb. 2010 in Long Beach, Calif., TED video, 19:51, https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory?language=en.

just the wrong end!). We always had enough; our trials strengthened our faith and family bonds. I was heartbroken when Jessie died, but I was obedient to the counsel I was given. That marriage was hard, but I had faith to endure and came to believe that the bad marriage was a placeholder until Johanna was ready. One day with her was worth enduring all the bad years that came before.”

Which version is truer? When he recorded his life history, many family members urged him to leave out the ten dark years. But in the end, he recorded the pain because he said, “How else could I truly show the joy of my life now?”

Take a moment to reflect on your current level of happiness. If you are filled with bliss and joy, congratulations! A shuttle to Kolob awaits! If, however, you feel your life is letting you down, take a look at your stories. Do they begin with “This would only happen to me” or “If only” or “Everybody else” or “I’ll be happy when . . .”? Each of these negative explanations makes it harder to envision a happy ending. Listen to how you explain the events in your life. Look for patterns. Is happiness perceived as unattainable? If so, your stories need a makeover. Remember: how you interpret and explain the everyday stuff of life will shape your story into a tragedy or an adventure. In short, what is keeping you from happiness?

We should not let idealized images make our story feel wrong. The hard or sad times are not just part of your story but the very elements that give you the potential to change and grow. Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote, “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves,”⁹ and “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s

9. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

own way.”¹⁰ We always have a choice. We cannot control the plot of our lives, but the theme is ours to shape.

Fear and insecurity frequently keep us from rewriting the script and keep us paralyzed. As life coach Kate Bartolotta wrote in an advice column for *HuffPost*: “We are all insecure fourteen-year-olds at heart. We’re all scared. We all have dreams inside of us that we’ve tucked away because somewhere along the line we tacked on those ideas about who we are that buried that essential brilliant, childlike sense of wonder. The more we stick to these scripts about who we are, the longer we live a fraction of the life we could be living.”¹¹

There was a period of my life that was ruled by fear. It started with a miscarriage. And then another. And then a pregnancy that mysteriously ended at seventeen weeks. My body recovered quickly, but my soul suffered. I did not think I could go down that path again. But the next spring I had dreams. I’d be asleep and then I’d hear “Mom, MOM, MOM” and feel a little finger poking me in the arm. I’d wake up grumbling “WHAT?,” expecting to see one of my girls, only to find myself alone. Yes, even my non-corporeal children are irritating.

After the third dream like this, my husband and I decided to try again and I became pregnant. Because of my history, my obstetrician sent me to the high-risk practice at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and I underwent so many tests that I often felt like I’d been abducted by aliens. At nine weeks, a somber nurse told me there was a problem and ushered me into the genetic counselor’s office. I heard the words *cystic hygroma*, *severe defects*, *chromosomal abnormality*, and *termination*. I stopped listening and just concentrated on breathing.

10. Ibid.

11. Kate Bartolotta, “How to Get Flat Abs, Have Amazing Sex and Rule the World in 8 Easy Steps,” *HuffPost*, Dec. 3, 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/happiness-tips_b_3956114.

That first appointment wasn't the end of it. Every time I went to the doctor it got worse. The cyst was growing, and my doctor would list for me all the things that might be wrong with my baby—if I even made it full term. Every time I went into her office, I felt despair. As these visits increased, I decided miracles were for other people, not me.

At the urging of a friend, I finally asked God for a miracle. And it was terrifying to lay my desires at the Lord's feet. Could my faith survive another heartbreak? God heard my prayers and gave me a gift: hope. I remember it felt tangible, this gift of hope that I could choose to take or not take. It wasn't a warranty against pain and suffering or a guarantee of a glittery and shiny outcome. But it shone brightly, like a star you might follow through the desert or a wilderness. And I followed. It gave me courage to reclaim the pregnancy. The first thing I did was fire my doctor because this one had been hijacking my story. Next, a dear friend organized a fast for me. I felt their faith bolster mine and I was wrapped in a warm, gentle peace. By month eight I had the courage to go ahead and prepare the nursery. I followed the star of hope and had faith that whatever awaited me in the manger would be a blessing—even if it were empty.

As it came time to deliver the baby, the room was filled with doctors and nurses waiting to see what they would need to do for this child. None of it stressed me at this point. I knew that whatever happened, God had heard me, and I would not be left alone. A healthy daughter arrived and medical professionals dubbed her "the miracle baby." I felt like the Holy Family as hospital personnel and friends streamed in and out of our room to behold our child. "Come let us adore her," I thought. We named her Beatrice, bringer of joy and blessings. And while I do think of her as my miracle baby, I know that choosing hope in the face of despair was in itself a miracle. Even if the ending of that chapter had been different, I knew I could live with my story.

Let me address here the relationship between the smaller stories of everyday life and the overarching story of our life. The way you explain

the daily events, no matter how trivial, affects the way you see your whole life. Sentences build paragraphs, paragraphs create chapters, and chapters form a book. It broke Eve's heart to leave the garden, but she recognized that it was necessary for growth and taught her that wisdom and joy, not just pain, were the fruits of the tree. Because I was willing to lay my heart at the Savior's feet and ask for a miracle in one situation, I now see miracles and hope sprinkled throughout my life. As it says in Alma 37:6, "by small and simple things are great things brought to pass."¹²

Change your story, change your life. It sounds ridiculously simple, but with the Lord's help we can own our stories and make them serve us. The Savior's atonement is to free humans—from death, from sin, but also from suffering and emotional bondage.¹³ The Atonement can release us from whatever prevents growth and forward movement. But it is up to us to act. To believe you are trapped in a story is to lose sight of the healing power of Christ. As with so many things in life, the key is repentance, which in most instances requires us to rethink, reexamine, and reframe our thoughts and actions so that they are in alignment with the divine.

For example, let's look at a small thing that makes me grumpy: bad drivers. When someone cuts me off, I fight the urge to honk and instead imagine the best reason why they did it. Perhaps the driver is taking someone to the emergency room or racing to the airport to stop their lover from leaving town. The choice is yours. When we encounter irritating people, we can choose to gift them a kind story. My sister's mantra is "assume goodwill." It reminds me of the Savior on the cross asking the Father to forgive his crucifiers because they "know not what

12. Alma 37:6.

13. See Helaman 14.

they do.”¹⁴ The next time you are offended, rethink your reaction, retell their motives, reclaim your happiness.

Tell Your Story

Alice Walker writes: “It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about. . . . We do it because we care. . . . We care because we know this: *the life we save is our own*.”¹⁵

Most of us don’t lead glamorous lives. Most of us feel like our stories are too mundane and simple to be of real value. The prophet Wilford Woodruff disagreed: “[Women and] men should write down the things which God has made known to them. Whether things are important or not often depends upon God’s purposes; but the testimony of the goodness of God and the things he has wrought in the lives of [women and] men will always be important as a testimony.”¹⁶ Our stories do matter. It is how we relate and shape the events of our lives that determine our happiness. It is in the telling that we find the meaning.

How do we tell our stories? We talk to our friends and family and share our lives. We learn to rethink and reclaim our daily tales with generosity, leaving room for growth and forgiveness. We take our pain and put it into words so that our loved ones can share it and infuse our sorrow with the sweetness of their compassion. We mourn with those that mourn. We revel in the silly and laugh until our embarrassment runs for cover. We bear testimony at the pulpit and the dinner table so that we know what we believe and bear witness to others in the process.

14. Luke 23:34.

15. Alice Walker, “Saving the Life that is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist’s Life,” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Prose* (New York: Open Road Media, 2011).

16. Wilford Woodruff, “The Book of Remembrance,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1966, 294–95.

We speak our ancestors' names out loud so that no one is forgotten. We look at our hard times, our losses, and rethink and reclaim and retell our stories until we find versions that ring true. And one day, like Eve, we will bear testimony that our pain and sorrows have made way for the joy of our salvation, one story at a time.

HEATHER SUNDAHL {hsundahl@gmail.com} is a writer and media specialist at the Utah Women and Leadership Project at Utah Valley University. She received a BA in humanities and an MA in English from Brigham Young University. Her passion is women's stories. In pursuit of this she has worked with *Exponent II* for twenty-three years as a contributor, blogger, editor, retreat presenter, and president. Heather has traveled to Botswana and South Africa to interview and collect the stories of the sister saints with the Mormon Women's Oral History Project. She lives in Provo with of her four kids, two cats, and one husband.

THE ORDER OF EVE: A MATRIARCHAL PRIESTHOOD¹

Kyra N. Krakos

It began in such a Mormon way: with a question. I asked a single daring question of my mother, and it turned into many. The questions began on a typical Sunday night, which is when I tend to putter around my kitchen fiddling over stacks of dishes, papers, and other things that accumulate and bother me. While I do this, I call my mother, and we have meandering catch-up-on-the-events-of-life chats. These are favorite hours in my weekend, which always end with me feeling close to my mother, and with my life a little more in order. Meanwhile, the bright lights of my busy kitchen are dimmed to only the hanging stained-glass pendant lights, which cast their warm orange glow over the sink. I think I bought the house because of these lights. My grandmother had similar ones, and I associate them with a deep, soothing childhood sense of peace and safety. My child self would get a drink of water at the sink late at night and hear my mother and grandmother laughing in the next room. I would soak in the security of my world. Now as an adult, I bask in that same gentle orange glow and connect to my mother.

1. For an introduction to women's blessings, see work by Fara Anderson Sneddon, "The History of Women's Healings and Blessings: An Interview with Author Fara Sneddon," *Segullah*, Mar. 22, 2019, <https://segullah.org/journal/the-history-of-womens-healings-and-blessings-an-interview-with-author-fara-sneddon>; Betina Lindsey, "Woman as Healer in the Modern Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23, no. 3 (1990): 63–76; Linda King Newell, "A Gift Given, A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women," *Sunstone* 6 (1981): 30–43.

This particular Sunday night, my mother sounded tired and sad. Her sorrow reached across the miles and hurt my heart. For years, she had been dealing with the kind of painful life heartaches that mothers experience because of the choices of others. My mother's weariness made me long to be able to fix something, anything. I wanted to offer some comfort beyond phone calls and prayers. This is the scientist in me—I like data and results. Biology is the lens through which I filter my world and my faith. I only like the unknown if I am able to start actively collecting data to make things known and fixed, or to make lost things found. Yet here was my mother with such feelings of loss, and I could not fix anything for her.

Our conversation shifted into an unusual area as we started talking about women giving blessings. The topic wasn't an obvious one for us, given her more orthodox Mormonism and my tendency to attend Mormon feminist conferences and other things that I suspected made her nervous. Yet female blessings speak to our pioneer heritage, and even the most orthodox women in my family were very certain of their capacity to give a blessing. If they had not themselves given such a blessing, they certainly knew of those who had done so. My mother surprised me with a few family stories of female relatives who had given or assisted in blessings decades ago.

As we discussed the tender nature of a mother's blessing and how many more women seem to be doing them these days, my mother expressed wistfully that she wished she had known about them earlier and been able to receive one from my grandmother. I had been reading and exploring the space of women's blessings. Many ideas crystallized for me and I felt deeply that I could stand proxy for my grandmother. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard myself say out loud, "Momma, do you want a mother's blessing? I can do it. I know how. I could stand proxy for Grandma."

There was silence. A big silence. A big, very loud silence. I had offered my straight-and-narrow mother a mother's blessing. This

was not done lightly. How had I felt such conviction and powerful a prompting forcible to overcome my anxiety at such a thought? And why was this silence so loud? I exhaled with relief and shock as she finally answered, “I would love that. But I have questions.”

Mormons always have questions. A question is what kicked off this whole religion. My science brain can’t handle how many questions my mother had and the non-linear path our conversations took over the next month, but here is a good summary of what they were and how I answered them. All of the following questions stemmed from the main question: Do women have the power and authority to do this?

Why did we need a restoration of priesthood?

The answer to this came from a common visual aid used with cups for family home evening and/or what was known as the third discussion in my mission era. The bottom twelve cups had the names of the apostles, and then cups with principles and ordinances were added on top, creating a lovely pyramid with the top cup displaying a picture of Christ. This was his church. The fun bit was killing off the apostles until the whole structure tumbled down, followed by some solemn statement like: “And this was the great apostasy. With the death of the apostles, no one on earth had the authority to build Christ’s church, so we needed a restoration.”

We needed a restoration of priesthood authority because the original line through Christ was broken in the apostasy. This is the Restoration lesson from my childhood. Priesthood in the scriptures has been associated with a patriarchal order, passed from father to son. However, there is a problem with patriarchal lines, and it is probably one of the reasons for having or requiring a written record. The problem with patriarchal lines is that they cannot be guaranteed. Paternity for most of human history has not been verifiable. This awkward fact has led to all sorts of fear-driven controls over women and their bodies, but

it has also likely led to the need for something verifiable and recorded for passing on male priesthood.

What is your priesthood line of authority?

There's a good chance that a quick look at any teenage Mormon boy's bedroom wall will show a framed document consisting of a list of names and dates tracing the boy's "priesthood line of authority." It looks like a tidy set of rows leading from the current priesthood-holder all the way back to Jesus Christ, clearly outlining the unbroken and documented transfer of priesthood authority by ordination. Pinterest and Deseret Book have supplied innumerable fancy ways to display this information. No wonder the young men of our faith often feel so secure about their place in the world.

I have no such list of names. I had nothing like this document to show my mother to demonstrate that my priesthood lineage was unbroken and known. So I gave her a picture of a mitochondria. “There you

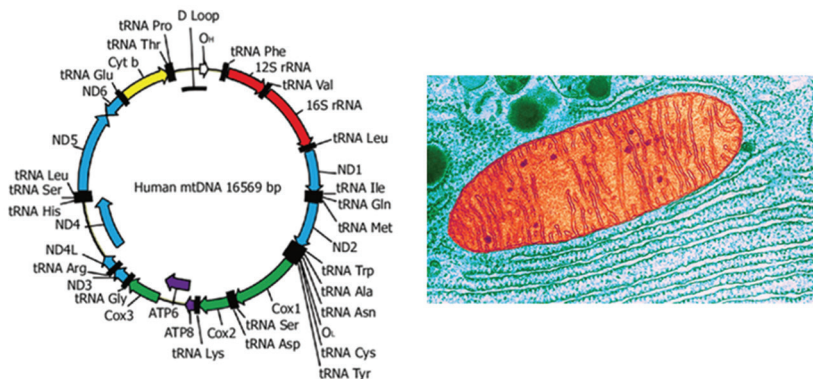


Figure 1. My priesthood line of authority: The human mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is a double-stranded, circular molecule of 16,569 base pairs and contains thirty-seven genes.

go Momma. If you like, I can extract and sequence the mitochondrial DNA. Frame it with something from Deseret Book.”

What do mitochondria have to do with priesthood authority?

It seems that everyone these days is spitting into test tubes and mailing their samples off to get all the juicy details of their DNA. We love to see how the genes shuffled out and what highs and lows are part of our genetic code. Most of us understand the concept of getting half of our DNA from Mom, half from Dad, and getting a brand-new combination creating a unique new person. That is nuclear DNA. It resides in the nucleus of the cell, providing our species with much needed and healthy diversity.

But there is another kind of DNA in your cells, known as mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). This DNA resides in the mitochondria and does not undergo the shuffling that nuclear DNA does with sexual recombination. Rather, it is copied and passed from parent to offspring without the drastic changes from recombination. You inherited your mtDNA from your mother, who inherited hers from her mother and so forth. Sons have their mother’s mtDNA, but they will not pass this on to their own daughters. Any mitochondria in sperm is destroyed shortly after egg fertilization. Because of this, mtDNA provides a way for us to track ancestry through females over hundreds of generations and millions of years. Mitochondria with their mtDNA provide an unbroken, matrilineal record.

When discussing by what authority this blessing could be done, I assured my mother that it was not the men’s priesthood I invoked. Those were patriarchal lines, and I would not pretend I had an ordination into these lines of authority. My priesthood was matriarchal. I carry my line of authority in every cell of my body, in an unbroken chain, without question; and I can read the code if I wish and trace back

all of my mothers. All the way back to our archetype of all women, Eve. We do not receive our priesthood by ordination; we are born with it.

In this way, matriarchal lines of authority are the most inclusive. Unlike patriarchal lines, they are not limited to only men. Every human alive has mitochondria that lets them trace their lineage back to the beginning of our species. It is not tied to gender, sex, or whether you have reproduced. You were born; therefore, you are connected and empowered.

Is it priesthood? What is a woman's priesthood?

In response to many questions regarding priesthood and women, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, "We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be?"²

Elder Oaks clarified that priesthood is the authority and power of God. By extension, that must also be the authority and power of our Heavenly Mother. I decided to give it a name. Not the Order of Aaron, that great Old Testament wingman to Moses, or the Order of Melchizedek, mentor and life coach to Abraham, but the Order of Eve, a matriarchal priesthood, in honor of the mother of all living. I carry her mtDNA within me, and her power resides in my body.



A month after the phone call, my sister and I traveled to my mother for the blessing. That morning, I stood looking in the mirror and could see so much of my grandmother looking back at me. I look like my grandmother, more than I do my own mother. I have her sharp angles,

2. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood," Apr. 2014, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

which work great for cheekbones but not so great for noses. I wish I'd inherited that glorious red hair she was not a little vain about. Genetics are a mixed bag. I have some of her good traits and one or two of her spicier traits. But above all else, I felt her hunger to comfort and bless her daughter, my mother. When I placed my hands on my mother's head, I felt my grandmother. I felt her maternal, all-encompassing love for her child.

We headed for the woods, seeking quiet and inspiration. The morning light filtered through leaves, creating a familiar maternal orange light. I inhaled, paused, and let the exhale carry my hands upward, stretching them out until they rested gently on my mother's soft hair. My sister's hands joined mine, our eyes locked together, she gave a short nod and I bowed my head. I closed my eyes and felt the power of a thousand generations of ancestral women steady my hands. "Elizabeth Williams, having authority as an endowed woman of Christ and authority as one in your matriarchal line, I place my hands on your head and give you a mother's blessing, for and in behalf of Roberta Stevens . . ."

As I spoke, I realized that it was a mother's blessing, but also a Mother's blessing. Just as you do not need to be a father to give a blessing on behalf of Heavenly Father, so it is with a Mother's blessing. We are Their children, and our blessings are a chance to give voice to the blessings of our Heavenly Parents.

My wise mother said it best: "Oh! Our priesthood didn't need to be restored because it was never lost!" Our matriarchal lines have never been broken. Mother to daughter, that unshuffled mitochondrial DNA handed down even when we weren't aware of it. There is never a question of who the Mother is; she cannot be erased.

We are not lost. We have always carried within us the power to bless and heal. I close my eyes when I am afraid, and feel the warm orange glow of maternal safety, and whisper to myself: "Nothing is lost. We are not lost. I am not lost."

I think about the authority of the prophetess Deborah, the leadership of Miriam, the zeal of Rebekah, the grit of Mary, and the sheer force of Eve. Eve didn't wait for permission either. She trusted herself and did what was needed. She never hesitated when it came to her children. I am my Mother's daughter.

KYRA KRAKOS {knkrakos@gmail.com} is an associate professor of biology and coordinator for the sustainability program at Maryville University, and a research associate at Missouri Botanical Garden. Kyra did her PhD at Washington University in St. Louis. She is a biodiversity fellow with the Living Earth Collaborative. Her lab focuses on the need to understand the dynamics of the natural world in a changing environment. She was Science Educator of the Year by the STL Academy of Science in 2016. She gave a TEDx Talk in 2015 called "Plants, People and Pollinators: A Love Story," available to watch online. Kyra lives with her husband and three children in a home that is "very, very nerdy."

“FOR THE POWER IS IN THEM”: LEONARD ARRINGTON AND THE FOUNDERS OF *EXPONENT II*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

This essay builds on a talk I gave at Utah State University on July 12, 2017 at a conference honoring Leonard J. Arrington, the first credentialed academic to serve the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as its official Church Historian. Arrington was a polymath, a multi-tasker, and a keeper as well as a writer of history. The USU conference honored the full range of his achievements. In addition to presentations by former history department colleagues, family members, neighbors, and friends, it featured economists, specialists in Western land use and irrigation, an aerospace executive, and a Latter-day Saint who as a teenager had been Arrington's home teacher. In the opening panel, a cataloguer, an editor, and a biographer offered different but complementary views of the massive diaries Arrington kept from 1971–1997.¹

My talk explored his relationship with a loosely organized group of women in the greater Boston area who produced a female-focused issue of *Dialogue* in 1971, launched *Exponent II* in 1974, and published

1. The program and videos of the presentations at the Leonard J. Arrington Centennial Conference can be found at <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/arrington100/2017>. The speakers on the diary panel were Matthew Godfrey, who catalogued Arrington's diaries at USU, Greg Prince, the author of a 2016 book on Arrington's work as a historian, and Gary Bergera, who was then completing the three-volume edition of the diaries published in 2018.

Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah in 1976.² From the beginning, he offered encouragement, practical support, and quiet confidence in our abilities. In the dedication to *Mormon Sisters*, we expressed our appreciation: “To Leonard Arrington. He takes us seriously.”³

Arrington embraced an admonition found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 58: “Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.”⁴ He never questioned but what those words applied to women as well as men. He published his first essay on the economic contributions of Utah women in 1955, well before second-wave feminism took hold. When called and sustained as Church Historian, he almost immediately hired Maureen Ursenbach and with her help established women’s history as part of the department’s agenda.⁵

2. Internal accounts of our early history include: Claudia Lauper Bushman, “Introduction,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 5–8; Claudia L. Bushman, “Preface,” *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, edited by Claudia L. Bushman (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976), xi–xiii; Claudia Lauper Bushman, “My Short Happy Life With *Exponent II*,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 178–92; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “The Pink *Dialogue* and Beyond,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 28–39; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Mormon Women in the History of Second-Wave Feminism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 45–63; Claudia L. Bushman, Nancy Tate Dredge, Judy Dushku, Susan Whitaker Kohler, and Carrel Hilton Sheldon, “Roundtable: *Exponent II* History,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 129–62; and Carrel Hilton Sheldon, “Launching *Exponent II*,” *Exponent II* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1999), available at <http://www.exponentii.org/history>.

3. Bushman, “Preface,” *Mormon Sisters*, v.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28.

5. Gregory A. Prince, *Leonard Arrington and the Writing of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 228–31.

When I gave my talk at USU, I was well aware of our connection to Arrington, but I was a bit fuzzy on details. That is hardly surprising. In the early seventies, no one in our group kept a diary. But he did! So when the opportunity arose to write this essay, I decided it was time to see what, if anything, he had to say about our relationship. Fortunately, his diary had just been published in a handsome three-volume edition with an excellent index.⁶ Tracking names and dates through its pages, I not only discovered missing details about our adventures, I developed a richer and more complex understanding of the larger context which brought us together.

Arrington and his co-author Davis Bitton called it the "unsponsored sector," a place where Latter-day Saints created worthy activities without formal Church control or sponsorship. Some were local innovations within general Church guidelines, others entirely independent.⁷ Arrington's own career is a case study in how this worked. He probably wouldn't have become Church Historian if he and others had not already developed a series of associations that built both scholarly and public interest in a revitalized Church history. He built on these associations as he began his new position, confident that he could harmonize the demands of scholarship and religious commitment. Arrington was not just a consummate historian but, in the words of one of his biographers, "as loyal a Latter-day Saint as ever professed the faith."⁸

6. Leonard J. Arrington, *Confessions of a Mormon Historian: The Diaries of Leonard J. Arrington, 1971–1997*, edited by Gary James Bergera, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2018).

7. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), chap. 16.

8. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 56–63, 133; Rebecca Foster Bartholomew, "A Life of Simple Goodness: Leonard James Arrington in 1971," in *Confessions of a Mormon Historian: The Diaries of Leonard J. Arrington, 1971–1997*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2018).

We shared Arrington's values, but our situation was quite different. Two decades or more younger than he, we were college-educated women, born in the West but now living in the East. Although most of us were "stay-at-home" mothers, we spent a lot of time sustaining the Church. In a stake known for very high standards, we had collectively volunteered hundreds of hours preparing lessons, revising scripts, designing posters, mastering quantity cooking, and researching, writing, editing, copy-reading, illustrating, and marketing a fabulously successful guidebook to Boston, a fundraising project organized by our ward Relief Society. In our lives, the relationship between the unsponsored and sponsored sectors was not very clear. Although none of us had a single minute of free time, we somehow felt an urge to do more.

Maybe that is why Leonard Arrington took us seriously.



Our group began with an informal meeting in my living room in June of 1970. At first, we simply wanted to talk about the implications of the new women's movement swirling around us. Before the summer was over, we had volunteered to produce an issue of *Dialogue*.

At the time, I don't believe any of us, with the possible exception of Claudia Bushman, knew Arrington personally. We encountered him first through the essay he submitted to our proposed issue of *Dialogue*. When Claudia read it aloud at one of our meetings, we erupted in cheers. It wasn't his erudition that impressed us. It was his story about Ellis Shipp, a polygamous pioneer woman who defied her husband in order to return to medical school. His scattershot references to things we had never heard of, like the passing of women's suffrage in Utah in 1870, made our small rebellions seem trivial.⁹

9. Leonard J. Arrington, "Blessed Damozels: Women in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 22–31; Ulrich, "Mormon Women."

Most of us met Arrington for the first time in May 1972, when he flew to Boston to participate in one of Boston Stake's landmark events—Education Week. According to his diary, he stayed the first night at the home of Claudia and Richard Bushman, where he met Cheryl May and her husband, Dean. "What an interesting evening!" he wrote. "We talked until 11 p.m. or later." Over the next two days he reported driving to and from the conference with Grethe Peterson and, among other things, hearing a talk on Africa by Judy Dushku.¹⁰ After attending a performance of Gabriel Fauré's Requiem by the combined stake chorus and ensemble, he wrote, "I could not help weeping for joy that such a strong bastion of the Church was now in the Boston area." After visiting with "scholars, historians, educators, and church members in the Boston region," he concluded: "These 'intellectuals' are loyal, active, good spirited, intelligent, and dedicated people."¹¹

His highlighting of the word *intellectuals* is significant. A week before leaving for Boston, he had spent forty-five minutes conferring with Elder Boyd Packer, who had regaled him with stories about the shortcomings of "intellectuals" who relied on their professional training rather than "the Spirit." Packer had singled out a psychologist, a Church financial adviser, and a former stake president in Vermont. He even seemed to criticize Elder Neal Maxwell, who, when serving as Church Commissioner of Education, had proposed creating a board of expert advisers. Packer said that a housewife with only a high school education who had successfully raised a family contributed more to a Church committee he had advised than all the academic experts the group consulted. Since Arrington had himself proposed creating a board of advisers, he asked Packer for comments on the persons he had suggested. Packer declined to approve or disapprove any of them but

10. Arrington, *Confessions*, 1:138–40.

11. *Ibid.*, 1:141.

noted his concerns about one person on the list, who “was great except for one hang-up he had problems on: namely the Negro question.”¹²

That conversation was obviously still fresh in Arrington’s mind when he learned that there were three black families in the Boston Stake. It also shaped his response to a comment by Richard Bushman about the lack of “hang-ups” among students in the area. “For some reason Dick can’t explain, the worry over intellectual conflicts declined when Boyd Packer came into the region [as mission president in 1963].” He concluded, perhaps with a hint of irony, “I plan to ask Elder Packer if he was aware of what he accomplished, and how he did it.”¹³

Arrington made no comment on women’s issues during his visit to Boston, perhaps because they too appeared to have been settled. That was not the case in Utah. In August, Carol Lynn Pearson, who had already established herself as a poet, visited his office. She too had become interested in history. He encouraged her efforts. “Certainly she is not a women’s lib advocate, but she does look for, hope for, pray for greater recognition of women in our history, in our culture, in the Church,” he wrote.¹⁴ A few months later, she gave him the “original unexpurgated draft” of an article on women’s suffrage in early Utah that had been accepted but heavily edited by the *Ensign*. Arrington noted that it was “based primarily upon the *Woman’s Exponent* which was the organ of LDS women’s rights at the time” and that the *Ensign*’s excisions

12. Ibid., 1: 134–38. Arrington commented that Packer “didn’t have the Ph.D. and seemed sensitive on that point.” He may or may not have been aware that in 1962, shortly after becoming a general authority Packer received a doctorate in educational administration from BYU. That was an Ed.D, not a Ph.D. See Cassidy Wadsworth, “Remembering President Boyd K. Packer,” *Daily Universe*, <https://universe.byu.edu/2015/07/03/remembering-president-boyd-k-packer1/>.

13. Arrington, *Confessions*, 1:141–42.

14. Ibid., 1:243–44.

"were mostly items which would seem to encourage women to leave the home and enter professional or business careers."¹⁵

Pearson told him that she had recently testified in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment at a hearing of the Utah Legislature. She explained that before doing so, she had contacted Belle Spafford, general president of the Relief Society. Spafford told her that she believed women had a right to speak their minds on things they had studied, but that she herself believed that the ERA would encourage permissive behavior. Not long afterward, Arrington learned that the *Ensign* had dropped Pearson's article.¹⁶

Weeks later, Jay Todd, editor of Church publications, told Arrington the full story. He said that because Spafford was out of town, Gordon B. Hinckley had made the decision to drop Pearson's article. Todd was quite annoyed because her article was already in galleys and dropping it forced a delay of several weeks in that month's *Ensign*. He said that Spafford affirmed Hinckley's decision when she returned, arguing that since the Church had not yet taken an official position on the ERA, any mention of women's rights would imply approval. He added that the ERA question was now being handled by Elder Boyd Packer, who had somehow gotten hold of a letter by Pearson that "apparently made some strong statements about the Church being dominated by men, by the priesthood, and that women didn't have a fair opportunity for expression. He read that letter to the Quorum of Twelve and they were very indignant about it, and that turned the tables on Carol Lynn." Todd also said that Packer had taken to the Quorum of Twelve "the special issue of *Dialogue* on women, and other matters."¹⁷

Arrington was nevertheless undaunted when a month later, Maureen Ursenbach came into his office to tell him she had just received a

15. Ibid., 1:415–17, 437.

16. Ibid., 1:416–17, 436.

17. Ibid., 1:471–73.

telephone call from Judy Dushku in Boston, who said that the women there had completed a series of lessons at the LDS Institute of Religion in Cambridge on women in Church history. Their discovery of a full set of the *Woman's Exponent* in Harvard's Widener Library had not only facilitated their research; it had generated a new project. Here is how Arrington described it: "[T]hey are going to hold a fair during the first week in June . . . to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the *Woman's Exponent*. They said they would like to invite Maureen to give the main address and to give it on Eliza R. Snow. They would pay her expenses back. Maureen wanted to know if she had my approval to go, and I told her yes, and told her she should definitely go. I gave her some suggestions on approaches to Eliza R. Snow she might incorporate into her paper."¹⁸ Although he referred to the proposed event as a "fair" (he may have meant "affair"), it was actually a gala dinner held at the home of Chase and Grethe Peterson.

That dinner had immediate and positive consequences for Arrington and the Church's history division. Jill Mulvay, who was then teaching in Boston, was so impressed with Ursenbach's talk that she went up to her afterward and asked how to get involved in historical research. On September 12, 1973, Arrington wrote: "Today Maureen and I interviewed Jill Mulvay who will work for us fall quarter on the biography project assisting Maureen to do a biography of Eliza R. Snow."¹⁹ Our group can therefore claim some role in creating the legendary partnership between Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Jill Mulvay Derr.

Meanwhile in Boston, we began revising the talks we had given at the LDS Institute hoping to create an anthology on nineteenth-century Mormon women. When finding a publisher proved difficult, we moved on to an even more exciting project. It was almost ready to go when Juanita Brooks spoke at our second Exponent Day dinner in June 1974.

18. Ibid., 1:482.

19. Ibid., 1:594. For Jill Mulvay's own account of her meeting with Ursenbach, see Prince, *Leonard Arrington*.

Exponent II, a quarterly newspaper devoted to the dual platforms of "Mormonism and feminism," appeared in July. Although it seems unbelievable now, we didn't at the time consider "feminism" a dirty word. As Arrington's own diary suggests, "women's lib" was the more common epithet for activist women. We were not agitators. Our goal was to give Latter-day Saint women a forum for expressing their own ideas. We took great pains to balance each issue with variant points of view. But we did believe in equality.

On November 27, 1974, Arrington described a meeting in which his advisers discussed concerns raised in a recent meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve. They shared with him a letter Elder Packer had sent to the First Presidency repeating his familiar warning about historians who relied on professional standards rather than "the revealed word of God." They added that some of the leaders were also concerned about "too many publications in *Dialogue*" by Church employees. In addition, the Quorum had discussed "Claudia Bushman's Women's Lib magazine, *Exponent II*." Arrington noted, "No further remarks on this." In his summary of the day's proceedings, he nevertheless pointed to an obvious solution: "Keep down our involvement with *Dialogue*, *Exponent II*, and *Sunstone*."²⁰

For Arrington, there was one high point in the discussion. When someone asked if the Church History Department should be required to clear its publications through the Correlation Committee, Bruce McConkie responded with verve: "We have to write history. We cannot avoid the responsibility. And so long as we have to do it, we have to get competent professional people. We cannot expect it to be done by an 8th grade Sunday School teacher or someone untrained."²¹

That might have been comforting for Arrington, but it had no relevance to *Exponent II*. We weren't professionals. We weren't writing

20. Arrington, *Confessions*, 1:753–56.

21. *Ibid.*, 1:755.

history. We were sharing personal essays, stories, poems, book reviews, and news sent in by Mormon women from all over the country. One of the most popular features was called "The Sisters Speak." The June 1976 issue, for example, featured responses from Urbana, Illinois; Burley, Idaho; and Provo, Utah, to the question: "Do you feel that you're happier when you discuss your problems with your friends or when you keep them to yourself?" On questions like that, women themselves were the experts.²²

Ironically, our first crisis was not triggered by something we wrote in our newspaper but by an amazingly positive story that appeared on April 13, 1975 in the *Boston Globe*. It highlighted the success of our church in keeping a vibrant and committed membership when other religious denominations seemed to be losing members. Unfortunately, somebody in Salt Lake City was unhappy with several references to Claudia Bushman. "A year ago, Mormon women in the Boston area established 'Exponent II,' a monthly publication edited by Mrs. Bushman," wrote the reporter. "She said she and others are trying to influence, though not criticize, such church policy as discouraging women with small children to work." Toward the end, the *Globe* raised the issue of the Church's exclusion of African Americans from the priesthood. Again they cited Claudia: "Mrs. Bushman said her husband, the Boston stake president, has tried without success to get blacks accepted as missionaries. There are many whites within the faith, she said, who wish the ban would be lifted. She said that a change in policy would require a revelation, noting that such a change had occurred in the late 1800s over polygamy."²³ Her comments may not have been discreet. But they were truthful. Local leaders were indeed trying hard to extend full fellowship to African American members without overtly challenging the Church's ban on priesthood.

22. "The Sisters Speak," *Exponent II* 2, no. 4 (June 1976): 17.

23. Kay Longcope, "The Mormon Experience," *Boston Globe*, Apr. 13, 1975, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The response came during a stake conference visit from Elder Robert D. Hales, who had recently been called as an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve. Years before, he had lived in Boston and was a friend of the Bushmans. He warned Claudia against continuing to participate in *Exponent II*, which he predicted would "come to no good." She listened. But when she shared this news with us, the paper's founders decided to write letters to Hales explaining what the paper meant to us and why we felt we should persist.²⁴

I do not remember whether I wrote a letter, but I have a vivid recollection of a second gathering in which former Boston Stake president L. Tom Perry, now a member of the Quorum of Twelve, gave us further counsel. He was gracious but concerned about our paper. He didn't insist that we quit publishing, but he did caution us that if we continued we might damage our own reputations. He explained that there would soon be a whole new set of callings for women at the regional level, and he didn't want us to be overlooked because of what some considered suspect behavior. I don't think any of us found that a particularly compelling argument. We had never aspired to "high" Church position. We knew that because of her husband's position, Claudia felt she had to resign. The rest of us were determined to carry on with Nancy Dredge as the new editor.²⁵

In November, Hales told Arrington that he "was attempting to bring a little imagination courage, and spontaneity into the church magazines." He said the *Ensign* was planning a special women's issue that would feature "an article by Claudia Bushman, poetry by Carol Lynn Pearson, and other things." The March 1975 *Ensign* did include

24. Bushman, "My Short Happy Life," 191-92; "Elder Robert D. Hales," General Authorities and General Officers, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/leader/robert-d-hales?lang=eng>.

25. Bushman, "My Short Happy Life," 191-92; "Elder L. Tom Perry," General Authorities and General Officers, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/leader/l-tom-perry?lang=eng>.

a number of pieces by women, although there is nothing in the issue to mark it as a “women’s issue.” Bushman’s lively essay focused on her grandmother, who had spent her girlhood on Indian reserves in British Columbia and Quebec and was converted to the Church by reading a copy of the Book of Mormon sent to her by relatives in Salt Lake City. There was nothing by Carol Lynn Pearson in that issue, although the *Ensign* featured three of her poems in April 1976.²⁶

Claudia was soon back at work on our abandoned collection of essays, thanks, she believes, to one of Carrel Sheldon’s “great surges of vision and energy.” This is how Carrel herself recalled the decision to go forward:

Our newspaper was an instant success, but our book, *Mormon Sisters*, had been making the rounds of publishers for a year without any success. Deseret Book said they “wouldn’t touch it with a ten-foot pole.” They thought it was a very good book, but “dangerous.” We thought it was important and should be published. So I turned my *Exponent II* job of “business manager” over to Roslyn Udall and set up Emmeline Press, Ltd. so we could publish *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* ourselves. Within a few months boxes of books completely filled my dining room, stacked from floor to ceiling.²⁷

Claudia explains that in order to finance the book, “a dozen women took a loan for \$1,000 each from a bank. Carrel arranged it from a local LDS banker-bishop.” Since we were able to advertise in *Exponent II*, sales were brisk. By the time the books arrived, the loans were paid off.²⁸ Nor had Arrington’s team abandoned us. Maureen Ursenbach’s

26. Arrington, *Confessions*, 2:119; Claudia L. Bushman, “Maggie Becomes a Mormon,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1975, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1975/03/mormon-journal/maggie-becomes-a-mormon?lang=eng>; Carol Lynn Pearson, “The Valentine,” “Prayer for an Afflicted Child,” and “Short Roots,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1976, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1976/04/poetry?lang=eng.

27. Sheldon, “Launching *Exponent II*.”

28. Claudia Bushman, email message to author, July 19, 2019.

talk on "Eliza R. Snow," Jill Mulvey Derr's essay on "Zion's Schoolmarm's," and a piece on "Pioneer Midwives" by Chris Rigby Arrington (Leonard's daughter-in-law) appeared alongside our essays in the table of contents.²⁹

On November 26, 1976, I wrote in a little journal about spending the previous day in Boston with my friend Bonnie Horne.

Bonnie & I went to the Bushman's. It looks nice despite a few printer's errors. Claudia repeated her anxieties about "getting people in trouble." . . . I don't know how to handle this sort of thing. I think it is damning to look for trouble from on high. Somehow we need to have more faith, not only in ourselves, but also in heavenly Father. I won't live in a garrison. Who are these bogey men out there? They are real—as Claudia's experience with the *Exponent* showed. Yet the paper goes on. . . . Well—I must read *Sisters* and decide if it should be banned or promoted. I like the cover.³⁰

The cover featured a turn-of-the-century photograph by George Edward Anderson in which three resolute women stand on the steps of a house looking outward.

Arrington's diary entry for Christmas Eve that year provides a tranquil coda to this story: "James and Susan and I made our annual pilgrimage to Boyd Packer to deliver two of Mamma's luscious pecan pies. He received us cordially." Afterwards, they carried "the Mormon Sisters" book to several female neighbors.³¹



Through a string of seeming coincidences, our DIY projects connected with Arrington's historian's shop. He graciously submitted an essay to

29. Bushman, *Mormon Sisters*, 25–88.

30. This entry comes from a small diary I kept intermittently from 1961 to 1962 and then on and off from 1976 to 1978.

31. Arrington, *Confessions*, 2:334.

our proposed issue of *Dialogue*, encouraged our efforts at historical research, and sent documents and people our way. But none of these things would have happened if we hadn't first volunteered to edit an issue of *Dialogue*, agreed to present a series of lectures at the Institute, dared to launch a feminist newspaper, and risked our own time and money to self-publish a book.

We played a small part in a much larger history. The diary Leonard Arrington kept between 1971 and 1997 shows how through collective effort and a risky combination of scholarship and activism, Latter-day Saint women living in widely separated parts of the United States embraced their own history. It preserves small moments in the lives of Lavina Fielding Anderson, Valeen Avery, Rodello Hunter, Linda Newell, Emma Lou Thayne, and others who in different ways contributed to a feminist awakening. It also contains powerful observations from the mostly invisible women who kept both the unsponsored sector and the Church itself going during a very difficult time. As Church Historian he helped to create the field of Mormon women's history. As a diarist he laid a foundation for future histories.

LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH {ulrich@fas.harvard.edu} began her writing career in 1956 with an essay in *Seventeen* magazine describing Christmas in Sugar City, Idaho, her hometown. A graduate of the University of Utah, she moved with her husband, Gael Ulrich, to Massachusetts in 1960, and then to New Hampshire, where she completed her PhD in early American history. She is the author of several prize-winning books, including *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870*, which was published in 2017. She recently retired from Harvard University and has begun sorting through a disorganized collection of old papers that helped inspire some of the thoughts in the essay in this issue. She and Gael now live in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania near some of their children and grandchildren and are members of the Philadelphia Fourth Ward.

WOMEN IN *DIALOGUE*: A RETROSPECTIVE

Claudia L. Bushman

I am very happy to see the publication of a new issue of *Dialogue* edited by *Exponent II* women. I have had dealings with both publications for more than forty years and know the positive influence that both of them have exercised. I am a prime example of how the two institutions have encouraged writing. I would probably never have done any writing without them.

I was not a precocious child who wrote little poems and stories praised by her parents and teachers. I had no idea of ever writing a thing. I did graduate from Wellesley College, in maternity clothes, and I completed a master's degree in English literature at Brigham Young University when my husband Richard had his first job there, but that was mostly so that I would have something to think about while doing household chores. My professors let me know that a faculty wife with little children was not a real student and so was out of place. The education was valuable, but it did not make me feel like an adult who had something to say. What happened was that I later moved into circumstances largely created by *Dialogue* and *Exponent II* that required me to write. And so I have written.

It was almost fifty years ago that a handful of Mormon ladies began to gather in greater Boston to discuss their lives. Many were student-wives engaged in menial and messy labor while their husbands explored big ideas and contemplated privileged futures. We all had much to say and said it over many times while nursing babies with toddlers crawling over our feet. We found great comfort in our mutual understanding and began to work together on various group projects.

On one occasion long ago, Gene England, the co-founder of *Dialogue* along with the late Wes Johnson and Frances Menlove, was coming to Cambridge, where we were then living. He was a family friend, not a colleague in any way, but I had had an inspiration that I was determined to act upon. And summoning such strength as I could muster, I told him that we had an underemployed group of smart women who worked well together and that I thought we could put together a women-authored and women-focused issue of *Dialogue*. And in one of his great roles as encourager, Gene, with no hesitation, told us to go ahead and do it. There were no questions as to our qualifications or intentions, no request for an outline of our plans. We were to go ahead and see what we could do. That would have been in 1969 or so. Our pink women's issue of *Dialogue* was published in 1971.

I had several such experiences with him. One time he called and asked me to write an introduction to a section of the reader's edition of the Book of Mormon he was planning to publish in seven small-boxed volumes. I was appalled. By then I had done a little writing, but I was no religious scholar. I shamefacedly admitted that I didn't know anything about the scriptures. I had grown up pre-seminary. I said I'd get Richard. Gene just laughed and laughed and said he wanted me to do it. I said I had nothing to say. He told me that I had to do it. So with heavy heart, I began to read the proposed scriptures. I read them and read them and eventually found out that I did have something to say. I eventually discovered that if I just kept reading material and thinking about it that I would always have something to say. Such was his power. Those little books were eventually published in 2008, after his death.

That was the spirit of Gene and of *Dialogue*: Go ahead. You can do it. As I was not a writer at all, I asked Laurel Ulrich, who was a writer and already a published one, to co-edit with me. She had moved to New Hampshire by then and was living a new life there, but she still came south to Boston often for meetings, and we had a steady email

correspondence. She wrote one of the articles for our issue. I suffered through writing the introduction and it was all I could do, but I was finally satisfied with it. Laurel later said I should have written an article too, but I had nothing more to say then. And so it went with our pink issue. We really did not know what we were doing. We requested articles from some people, looked through other submissions, discussed what articles we wanted to see, and hunted for people to write them. We gradually came on other things of interest through conversations and recommendations and gathered them in. We discussed all of this at our meetings, getting support for some pieces, deciding against others, and very gradually finding our way to involve and encourage the members of our group. At the close of the issue we listed twenty-eight contributors along with another eight members of our group “who made significant contributions.” Three of the contributors were men. Leonard Arrington was a major contributor with a nice article about pioneer women. He had long been a supporter of ours—I might say our first and most helpful supporter. Gene and Leonard made a big difference in my life, especially my life as a writer.

At early meetings of the MHA, the Mormon History Association, the organizers met informally afterhours to talk about plans, trends, and whatever. During one of these late-night sessions my husband Richard told Leonard that our group of Mormon women was involved in some novel projects, one of which was to edit a woman's issue of *Dialogue*. Leonard found that interesting, asked some questions, and wrote about the conversation in his omnipresent journal. Richard told me about this conversation on his return home, and in a day or so I received a long letter from Leonard, the great man himself. He said how delighted he was to hear of our work and how important he thought Mormon women's lives were and offered his help and that of his staff for whatever needs we had. It may have been on that occasion that he offered us the article that became “Blessed Damosels: Women in Mormon History,” which introduced us to those early educators, the

Cook sisters, to Louisa Lula Greene, Ellis Shipp, and Martha Hughes Cannon. I remember group discussions about whether we should “allow” any men into the issue, but when Leonard Arrington offered us his “Blessed Damozels,” we quickly decided to take it.

The other two men were Richard Cracroft and A. Laurence Lyon, two professors who wrote learned reviews of Carol Lynn Pearson’s successful musical *The Order is Love*, based on the historical LDS practice of the United Order in the 1880s.¹ I don’t remember how we came to have those reviews. I expect that they were originally solicited from the authors by the *Dialogue* editors and then offered to us as being suitable for our issue because of Carol Lynn’s status as the preeminent female LDS playwright.

It should be said that considerable time elapsed between Gene’s invitation to us to create a women’s issue and when we submitted the material to the new editorial board. We were very surprised to discover that they were disappointed with the material that we submitted. I recall that they did acknowledge that we had covered a large area of women’s activities, talents, history, and so on, but they regretted that we had not dealt with the “real” Mormon women’s issues. When we asked what those were, we were told: patriarchy and polygamy. This came as a surprise to our women’s group. Patriarchy and polygamy were certainly important historical issues, but they were not our issues. And was it not rather presumptuous for them to tell us what our issues were? Were we pitiful young Mormon women not allowed to have our own issues but required to inherit them from scholars who knew better than we did? There was some doubt about whether our material was acceptable,

1. Richard Cracroft, “Fiddlin’ Around in Orderville, or, A Mormon on the Roof,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 118–22; A. Laurence Lyon, “Lyrics and Love in Orderville,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 122–23.

but the journal did reluctantly publish our articles as submitted in the summer issue in 1971, almost fifty years ago.

In fairness I should say that our group decided that if the *Dialogue* people thought that patriarchy and polygamy were the most pressing issues, maybe we should learn more about them. And with that spur we began a group study of Mormon women of the past. We chose topics and began to do research at the Boston Public Library. Susan Kohler drew our attention to the *Woman's Exponent*, the pioneer women's publication published from 1872–1914 and archived at Harvard's library. Invited by Cambridge Institute director Steve Gilliland to teach a class on Mormon women for the Institute, our group divided up topics, prepared and delivered lectures. We eventually turned those lectures into a book, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, with plenty of information on patriarchy and polygamy. Down the line, those same women began publishing *Exponent II*. That series of events and activities created lifelong friendships and connections. We worked together. We made somethings out of nothing. We did things we didn't think we could do. We discovered that what was required was an idea. If someone could actually verbalize it, we could probably do it.

I've reread that pink issue on this occasion to see what was there, noticing first the remarkable, later called subversive, illustrations of Carolyn Durham Peters, whose work enriched *A Beginner's Boston*, *Exponent II*, and the pink issue of *Dialogue*. For this issue she set many nifty quotations as headpieces for the articles. Her frequently reprised drawing of the tree of knowledge with a low-hanging apple is seen throughout. Her wonderful full-page drawing titled "The Women's Movement: Liberation or Deception?," featuring the appled tree but now with a fork-tongued serpent named Liberation, showing alternative possibilities to the title's question, should be reproduced and worked in cross-stitch. The full-page board game, "The Find-The-Straight-&-Narrow-Path Game, FOR WOMEN PLAYERS ONLY," shows the way

to meaning and fulfillment and the many hurdles that hinder women's way.

It is worth noting that the final lines of my letter from the editor in that issue of *Dialogue* are, "Women have always been valued in the Church but not encouraged to say much. We hope that now and in the future more ladies will speak out and, what is more, be heard."² That was in 1971. I hoped then that we were on the cusp of much female expression, yet the Church still has a relatively quiet group of ladies. Evidence of this is a talk that President Russell Nelson, in his conference talk of October 2015, forty-five years later, while yet an apostle, felt inspired to urge women of the Church to "speak up and speak out."³ Did he really mean it? I don't hear this message from others or see it in action. Yet, this current women's *Dialogue* issue forthrightly calls for articles about "Women Claiming Power." I notice that this audacious description is based in the present, describing contemporary action rather than looking to the past as in "Women Who Have Claimed Power." But while it's not "Women Exercising Power," at least it isn't "Women Who Had Hoped to Have Claimed Power" or "Women! Claim Power!" We hope to see some ongoing pioneer action here, even as we know that many women still feel helpless and hopeless in very limited spheres.

Maybe it was to be expected that the major articles we put in the pink *Dialogue* issue in 1971 dealt with potential relationships, marital relationships, and motherhood. I don't remember it as a conscious

2. Claudia Lauper Bushman, "Women in Dialogue: An Introduction," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 8.

3. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," Oct. 2015, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/10/a-plea-to-my-sisters?lang=eng>.

decision. It was just the way things were. Maybe as an unconscious defensive measure, we began our pink issue with our most conservative article, Jaroldeen Asplund Edwards's rapturously positive account of her happy family life with eleven children.⁴ And I know from experience that she spoke true. In addition, we had articles about blended families, the complexities of attending graduate school with young children, a mother's decision of whether to work outside the home, and the Church leadership advice of the time to have as many children as possible. We talked around the edges of power but did not have the audacity to claim it.

There is a lot of other good stuff in that pink issue: pictures, poetry, and personal voices. We sought out and included a lot of women's ideas and attitudes, including composite articles in some subjects, such as one compiled by Shirley Gee on housekeeping, entitled "Dirt."⁵ We thought we were being very diverse, but much of what we gathered was centered around the household.

By contrast the materials in the new women's *Dialogue* focus outside the dwelling place and beyond the basic family group. The plan of the current editors is to explore women's reaching out and "claiming power" beyond the home in such diverse directions as at church, where they seek to redefine their roles; in society, where they now exercise some key leadership roles; in the greater global world, where they explore the accomplishments of women in different societies; in the artistic world, where *Exponent II* has been a profound encourager of art; and wherever women explore concepts of Heavenly Mother, creating

4. Jaroldeen Asplund Edwards, "Full House," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 9–13.

5. Shirley Gee, comp., "Dirt: A Compendium of Household Wisdom," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 84–87.

accepted doctrine as they go. Will the editors and contributors be able to create and describe this new world? Will women's roles continue to expand in the Church as well as in society? Will this issue be descriptive of the current role of Latter-day Saint women in the world? Will it encourage others to break new ground? Let's revisit these questions in 2070.

CLAUDIA BUSHMAN {claudia.bushman@gmail.com} holds degrees from Wellesley College, Brigham Young University, and Boston University. She is a social and cultural historian of the nineteenth-century United States, currently working with and on the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts, Resurrection Month for the Morningside Heights Ward in New York City, and *Scarlet Letters*, a literary journal for her Wellesley graduating class. She has had a long and fond history with *Exponent II* and *Dialogue*.

MORMON WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY

Edited by Emily Clyde Curtis

In our Church, we often see continual revelation and innovation. For years, we have watched men expand their roles in leadership callings. It comes as no surprise that there are LDS women who feel called by God to practice pastoral care in ways that go beyond what is currently defined and expected for women in our religion. Here we define pastoral care as a model of emotional and spiritual support; it is found in all cultures and traditions. In formal ways, we see women provide this type of care when they teach and lead in the auxiliaries, serve as ministering sisters, and serve missions. We also see this when a sister holds the hand of another during a difficult sacrament meeting or brings a casserole to a home where tragedy has struck. Women are well-trained to provide service as one of the ways to minister to their ward and stake community.

As these women show, ministry can be so much more. The path of ministry sometimes means going to divinity school, working as a lay minister, or even seeking ordination in a Christian tradition outside of the LDS Church where women can be ordained. We have asked the following women to share their stories about how they have expanded their ability to minister through theological education and their chosen pastoral vocations. As pioneers who are expanding the roles of ministry for Mormon women today, we also ask how the Church can enhance the traditional model of women's ways of ministering and how this can be shaped by future generations.

Katie Langston converted to orthodox Christianity after struggling with Mormonism's emphasis on worthiness. She is now a candidate for ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and works at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Brittany Mangelson is a full-time minister for Community of Christ. She has a master of arts in religion from Graceland University and works as a social media seeker ministry specialist.

Rachel Mumford is the middle school chaplain at the National Cathedral School, an Episcopal school for girls in Washington, DC. She is an active participant in both Episcopal and LDS communities of faith, reflecting her Mormon heritage as well as the resonance she finds in Episcopal tradition.

Jennifer Roach is a formerly ordained pastor in the Anglican tradition. She is a recent convert to the LDS Church and had to walk away from her ordination in order to be baptized. She works as a therapist in Seattle.

Nancy Ross is a professor and ordained elder and pastor for the Southern Utah Community of Christ congregation.

Fatimah Salleh began life as Muslim, converted to the LDS Church as a teenager, and was recently ordained a Baptist minister after attending Duke Divinity School. Her call to ministry is part of a colorful journey into finding a God for all and for the least.

How do you think members of the Church traditionally define the role of women as ministers?

BRITTANY: “Ministry” or “ministers” are not words I heard much growing up LDS. Traditionally in the Church, the work of women is largely confined to what they can do to serve the youth, children, and other women. Women do not lead men and are expected to serve as a helpmeet to offer support. Women in the LDS church take great pride in being part of the Relief Society and do a fabulous job of networking with other women in compassionate services and ministries to their local congregations. As we have seen, however, women’s voices and spiritual gifts have virtually no place in major decision-making conversations. Most members do not seem overly bothered by this.

RACHEL: I see this Church definition to be grounded in the idea of service to God through service to others. This draws from the meaning of

“minister” as an agent acting on behalf of a superior entity. Until recent direction from Church leadership, members didn’t refer to the idea of “ministry” often, at least in my generation. What I have heard in the last year has been focused on developing a personalized relationship with other members of the ward, particularly those assigned through the ministering program, through attention to their various needs. It’s essentially visiting and home teaching, but with a more flexible, open-ended approach to connecting with others.

KATIE: I’m not sure that “ministry” in general is a term that Mormons use very much; even the new home and visiting teaching programs are referred to as “ministering,” which connotes a particular action people take, as opposed to a “minister,” which confers a kind of identity. Having said that, my experience growing up in the 1980s and ‘90s was that women’s contributions to the community were expressed in terms of nurture and charitable service, with motherhood being extolled as the highest expression of this role.

How do you see your role as a minister? How is it different and how is it similar to the traditional Church model?

NANCY: A few months ago, I became the pastor of my congregation. I have had a lot of mentorship leading up to this and support now that it is my role. Being a pastor is very different from being a bishop, whose job it is to give counsel. My job as a pastor is mostly to listen and affirm that people are loved by God—that they are whole and worthy regardless of whatever brokenness they feel. I organize meetings and events, but I do so with the help of everyone in my congregation.

FATIMAH: I view my role as a minister as being more expansive and deeper than the role in the LDS tradition. I am ordained to be present in hard circumstances, and I have to learn the skill set of presence work:

how to show up at hospitals, prisons, at places of pain, and be emotionally and spiritually prepared to help others carry their pain.

In the hospital where a mother was saying goodbye to her son, who was killed in a drunk driving accident, I was called to the bedside, and I was called to walk with this mother in deep rage and grief. I wasn't there to defend God but to hold grief and deep sadness with a mother. My job is not to fix or defend God and not to try to make hard situations okay.

RACHEL: I carry the person-to-person ministering role in my LDS Church community, seeking to care for others in a way that feels genuine on both sides, to know one another and care for each other on the long journey of life. In addition, I also have a specific role in the spiritual leadership of my Episcopal school community. This is being a "minister" in the other sense, as a member of the clergy with a calling and responsibility to serve in an official capacity in the community. While I do not officiate in some aspects of the Episcopal liturgy that necessitate an ordained priest, I do work hand in hand—and heart in heart—with my fellow chaplains to plan and lead our services and offer pastoral care to our community.

BRITTANY: Along with three other women, I lead the entire congregation in worship, fellowship activities, community outreach, and education and development of our congregants. My ordination and status as a minister are pivotal to this work. I see my role as a pastoral presence in moments of crisis and in the midst of debilitating faith transitions. My job as a minister is a promise I have made to my church, to God, and to the people I serve that I am committed to peacemaking and reconciliation. I will be there to listen, to walk with, and to hold out an invitation to know a God who loves unconditionally.

KATIE: I'm very Lutheran in the sense that I believe strongly in the priesthood of all believers and that all baptized Christians are called to

ministry. My particular call as a public leader in the church makes me no more or less a minister than the nurse, teacher, entrepreneur, service worker, or garbage collector in the pews. The call of public leadership is to preach the gospel of grace, to administer the sacraments of baptism and communion to the people, to speak to contemporary matters of justice and morality, and to be present at the threshold moments of people's lives: birth, death, and transitions of all kinds.

What are your spiritual gifts?

BRITTANY: I think my spiritual gifts are the ability to be fully present in the moment, to have true empathy, and to find a point of connection with almost anyone I meet. I am able to make people comfortable almost immediately, and that is simply an aspect of my personality. In many ways, I feel that our spiritual gifts are simply an extension of who we are. I use them constantly, not simply at church or when I'm engaged in church work. Developing them has benefited me in just about every aspect of my life.

FATIMAH: One of my spiritual gifts is a love of the scriptures. I work with both other pastors and congregants to understand the scriptures in a way that shows them God and helps them hear God's voice. In these works, I can see how social justice is carved out in the word of God.

RACHEL: I have a seeking, hopeful heart. I find joy in asking questions about the nature of life, humanity, and divinity, and I marvel at the many ways that people have explored these questions over time and place. I can find existential wonder in the contour of a line, the dialogue of an ancient story, or the burst of sound. I can listen and I can love. I feel with others the range of joy through sorrow. I love the craft of words, I find spiritual expression in writing, and I revel in the spiritual tension and expanse of scripture, poetry, and story.

I feel most alive spiritually when I am teaching, writing, planning worship with others, or in one-on-one conversation. My work as a school chaplain feels truly like a vocation, being called through experience to the work where I can give with a whole heart. When I was applying to divinity school, I heard the quote from Frederick Buechner that “the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”¹ I have felt this as I have learned the work of a school chaplain, where I can celebrate the diverse gifts of my students and colleagues and affirm the creative work of making worship authentic. Mary Oliver wrote, “My work is loving the world.”² I feel this work deeply in my calling to sit with colleagues, parents, and young people, to listen, to hold with them what needs to be held, to laugh, to grieve, and to embrace life.

NANCY: I am still trying to figure this out. I give a lot of blessings, both in writing and in person. I can also organize stuff and get things done. This is really useful in church work. A few years ago, I had the idea that I wanted to create an interfaith service for Pride in my city. The main organizer for Pride was initially hesitant about a religious service, but he attended our event and had a good experience. Since that first event, I have been asked to coordinate a similar event for Pride every year. My get-stuff-done gifts have allowed me to build relationships of trust in the community. My congregation looks forward to demonstrating support for our local LGBTQ+ community each year. Pride has become an essential outreach event for our group.

KATIE: I think I have spiritual gifts of communication and teaching. I have always been interested in writing and gravitated naturally toward

1. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 119.

2. Mary Oliver, “The Messenger,” *Thirst* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

a career in marketing and communications after college, where I've worked for about the last fifteen years. To a large extent, my current position in communications and innovation at Luther Seminary is a very meaningful expression of my ministry because I have a chance to help leaders develop more life-giving practices of forming Christian community and faith. I feel called to help reshape the public conversation around Christianity so that we can repent of what often amounts to petty and destructive tribalism in order to live into the liberating and world-expanding gospel of Jesus.

JENNIFER: I think gifts change over the course of one's life, and the kinds of gifts I previously needed, I don't have much interest in anymore. These days I see my gifts in three areas. First, I know how to be with people in their grief. I will mourn with those who mourn. Second, I can help people escape from shame. Shame always destroys. Somehow, I see people's shame and know how to help them out of it. I think Jesus did this a lot—helped people to see the God-given goodness in them. Third, I am on the lookout for the ones who are alone, lonely, left out, and sad. I find ways to include them and let them know the joy of feeling part of a group that accepts them.

What has most surprised you about finding your ministry?

BRITTANY: I'm continually surprised at how inadequate I feel, and yet when I show up prepared and open to God's Spirit, things seem to work out exactly how they need to be. Sometimes, I feel like I need to have all the answers or to have all my "stuff" figured out, but the work I do wrestles with and sits in the uncertainty. God always shows up in those gray areas and I'm not sure that will ever stop surprising me.

FATIMAH: I am a minister at a local Baptist church. When I first began this work, local pastors from many different Christian traditions would

ask me to come preach to their congregations. At first, I was concerned as I tried to explain to a kind Pentecostal pastor that I was Baptist and couldn't preach to his congregation because we weren't from the same denomination. He looked at me like I had two heads. It was then that I realized pastoral vetting is very different outside of hierarchical churches like the LDS Church or the Roman Catholic Church. Most Christian pastors want to know a couple things: "Is this pastor engaging and thoughtful?" and "Do they know the word of God?" The religious tradition one belongs to doesn't really matter to them.

KATIE: I've been surprised at how hard it is. People are difficult everywhere you go, and church people are no exception. Ministry—and, ultimately, faith itself—is about wading through human brokenness and hoping against hope that God is somehow present in the midst of it, and that God's promises of grace, forgiveness, and bringing life from death are real, even when it seems as if there's only chaos and despair.

If you are ordained, how did you decide to take that step? Do you see that as a break or an enhancement of your religious life as a Latter-day Saint?

FATIMAH: I attended divinity school because I didn't know what to do with the call that was rumbling inside of me. I attended divinity school to wrestle with God. So, I went, and I wasn't on ordination track. I considered myself a religious refugee. Then, I found a place through my internships as part of my program where I shadowed two pastors, one Methodist and one Baptist. Both of those pastors would inculcate me with a vision of ordination. I cannot thank those two men enough for seeing ordination in me and speaking life of ordination into me.

JENNIFER: I was previously ordained and gave it up when I joined the LDS Church. I am a recent convert (baptized six months ago) and of

all the things I had to give up, my ordination was probably one of the easiest because of what I believe the nature of ordination actually is. For me, ordination is a community's way of naming the gifts that already exist in a person. I had been displaying the gifts of a pastor for many years before my ordination. My community simply decided to make it official. Walking away from my ordination doesn't take those gifts away from me. I am still every bit the minister that I was before, it just looks different in the cultural context of the LDS world.

I had to seriously re-contemplate this about a month after my baptism when a new LDS friend told me, rather angrily, that I had made a mistake in giving up ordination, "You walked away from what we are all fighting so hard to obtain! What have you done?!" But as I sought to discern what this could mean for me, I knew that all the gifts I have been given are still intact: compassion, a non-judgmental approach, and the ability to diffuse someone else's shame. Those are gifts God gave me, not a church system, so no church system can take them away.

BRITTANY: I would not consider myself a Latter-day Saint any longer and see my ordination as a complete break from my former religious life. Ordination in Community of Christ comes as a response to the needs of the community, the giftedness of the person, and the needs of the community they will be serving. Calls are initiated by church leadership, and to be honest, I have struggled deeply with my call. I had twenty-six years of baggage, damage, and insecurities I was working through when my call came, and it came unexpectedly. I had to work through a new understanding of what ordination meant and decide if it was a responsibility I wanted to take on. Being ordained in Community of Christ in Utah means working with people who are seeking spiritual refuge. It's difficult to completely break away from the culture here, and by being ordained, I was saying I was willing to stand in those moments of faith deconstruction with the hope of being a help and support in the reconstruction. Although I no longer consider myself a Latter-day

Saint, I very much consider myself to be a disciple and follower of Jesus. My ordination has enhanced my understanding of Jesus' message of good news to the poor and downtrodden. My ordination has taken me down a path of learning to set my own ego aside and be fully present in the moment for others. It's given me more empathy and patience and has expanded my understanding of the importance of intention and finding a holy rhythm in life. I am more holistic and self-aware than I was before, and I try a lot harder to hold myself accountable to protect the rights and voices of the most marginalized. These things were important to me before, but through ordination, the purpose of Jesus' mission has come alive.

KATIE: It's not possible to simply un-Mormon myself, so I'm sure my Mormon-ness will always be an important part of my pastoral identity. There are times I'm shocked at the ways in which white mainline Protestants struggle to speak about their faith even within their own families. In meetings with colleagues I'm always saying things like, "This must be my inner Mormon coming out again, but *seriously?*" Mormons do such a powerful job of instilling identity. And while not all of the tactics they employ to do so are healthy, there's something very admirable about that, and I want to bring that commitment to identity and community forward into my ministry. I think that's a gift of my Mormonism that I can share with the broader church.

How has your faith and/or spiritual practice deepened as a result of your chosen vocation?

FATIMAH: I had to endure my own faith shattering. As I result, I have learned to hold my faith very tenderly; I allow it to fall apart, to grow, and to morph in ways that are unexpected because I have learned that I don't want to hold it so tight that I can't grow it with God. A faith that never undergoes shattering and wounding, I don't know if that's really

faith. It's that process that helps you to know that God is still in the midst and with you.

JENNIFER: Ordination can be a real trap when it functions as a belief-limiting scenario. While I was ordained there was no freedom to explore belief beyond what was already prescribed. There were black-and-white limits to what I was allowed to believe. Ordination can be a blessing, but it also can be a straitjacket. You sign on the dotted line and must believe these things and never change. But I like to change and grow. I know how to recognize God's leading in my life, and the day came when following truth was more important than clinging onto my ordination.

NANCY: As an LDS woman, I prayed, fasted, and read the scriptures almost obsessively. I felt that my connection to God was limited to those activities. I now engage in a lot of different spiritual practices and recognize that spiritual practice is more about intention and connection to God and self rather than any particular action. I think that this allows me to see that many activities can have a spiritual dimension. All of this has made my spiritual life richer and more fulfilling to me.

BRITTANY: I am much more mindful of how God moves in and through the everyday. I am not worried about being found worthy of God's love or presence, I now understand that it is all around me and others with whom I come into contact. My ministry has become part of me. I do not stop being a minister once my workday is over. It has also shown me just how little I actually know about life and how much I rely on God and my community for support.

KATIE: Leaving Mormonism and discerning a call to ministry was a decade-long series of existential crises. There were times I couldn't bring myself to open a Bible or pray because it hurt so much. There were times that all I could do was fall on my face and cry out to God because it

hurt so much. There were moments of revelation, moments of struggle, moments of anger, moments of healing. “What the hell are you doing with me?!” were words I shouted to God more than once. Through it all, God has drawn me closer, even when I wanted nothing to do with God and resisted the pull. God is faithful—even when it drives me crazy and I wish God wouldn’t be *quite so* faithful, God is faithful.

What do you hope to see in future generations of LDS women when they feel called to ministry?

BRITTANY: I hope women feel empowered to answer the call in whatever way feels best and most natural to them. Listen and trust the voice inside of you, even if it scares you. Whether that is staying in the LDS Church or finding opportunities to serve outside of the Church. I hope the LDS Church opens up more doors of ministry, but my hope is that women do not let closed doors stop them from answering God’s call.

FATIMAH: My hope is that more and more women are able to live out their calls in the Church, and that the Church will grow to hold women’s calls with greater depth, expansiveness, and inclusivity. I believe in a God who can part the Red Sea and who sits with people in their greatest pain with love. I believe in a God who is a promise keeper.

RACHEL: Allow yourself to feel and follow that call. Feel confident that as you are seeking God, and seeking good, that you will find comfort and joy in that journey. In the Gospel of Luke, when Mary unexpectedly found herself closest to the divine, she heard the words, “Fear not.”³ I hope that LDS women will feel free to be as creative as they want to be, and that they will share their gifts of a passionate mind, open spirit, and loving heart. Be the voice you want to hear. God is with you.

3. Luke 1:30.

KATIE LANGSTON {langston.katie@gmail.com} converted to orthodox Christianity after struggling with Mormonism's emphasis on worthiness. She is now a candidate for ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and works at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

BRITTANY MANGELSON {brittanymangelson@gmail.com} is a full-time minister for Community of Christ. She has a master of arts in religion from Graceland University and works as a social media seeker ministry specialist.

RACHEL MUMFORD {rachel.mumford@gmail.com} is the Middle School Chaplain at the National Cathedral School, an Episcopal school for girls in Washington, DC. She is an active participant in both Episcopal and LDS communities of faith, reflecting her Mormon heritage as well as the resonance she finds in Episcopal tradition.

JENNIFER ROACH {jenroach@comcast.net} is a formerly ordained pastor in the Anglican tradition. She is a recent convert to the LDS Church and had to walk away from her ordination in order to be baptized. She works as a therapist in Seattle.

NANCY ROSS {nancyross@gmail.com} is a faculty member in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences department at Dixie State University, where she has been teaching for thirteen years. Her degrees are in art history, but she moonlights as a sociologist of religion. She recently co-edited a book with Sara K. S. Hanks titled *Where We Must Stand: Ten Years of Feminist Mormon Housewives* and has just co-edited *Shades of Becoming: Poems of Transition* with Kristen R. Shill. She is an ordained elder and pastor in Community of Christ.

FATIMAH S. SALLEH {fsalleh@gmail.com} was born in Brooklyn, NY to a Puerto Rican and Malaysian mother and an African American father. She is the eldest of seven. Dr. Salleh received her PhD in mass communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also earned a master's degree from Syracuse University in public communication and a second master's in divinity from Duke University. She is the co-author of *The Book of Mormon for the Least of These*, released in January 2020. She is married to Eric Sorensen, and they have four children.



Heidi Somsen
A Time to Kill and a Time to Heal
sculpture

WOMEN IN WORKPLACE POWER: A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Edited by Barbara Christiansen

Women's work has always been multifaceted and applied across all aspects of human experience. Women have filled many roles: queen, mother, inventor, artist, healer, politician, caretaker, prophet. Women's voices have been loud and quiet, sometimes invisible but always present, on the vanguard or on the margins, leading, pushing, making change. Today more women have the opportunity to fill prominent leadership roles, many in spaces and with titles that until recently were occupied only by men. What follows is an interview with five women in roles that carry organizational power who fill them with hard-won confidence and ownership. They reflect on their own journeys to accept this power while honoring the roles that all women play in their individual spheres of influence.

Anja Shafer: Deputy Chief Development Officer, Accion International.

Anja leads the development team and oversees fundraising and sustainability efforts for a global nonprofit organization focused on financial inclusion.

Debbie Theobald: CEO, Vecna Technologies. Debbie leads daily operational oversight of the executive team, closing key deals, establishing business partnerships, and making final decisions on product roadmaps and strategic priorities.

Mehrsa Baradan: Professor of Law, UC Irvine School of Law. Mehrsa teaches, researches, and writes about banking law, financial inclusion, inequality, and the racial wealth gap.

Pandora Brewer: Senior Director of Store Operations, Crate and Barrel. Pandora's team is the interface between the corporate office and stores. She oversees project management, resource development, cross-functional partnership, and escalated store support.

Erianne Weight: Associate Professor, University of North Carolina; Director, Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics. Erianne serves on executive committees of university and national governing bodies to direct policy and growth. She leads grants, consultancies, and research projects to facilitate data-driven decision-making in intercollegiate athletics.

Were you ever uncomfortable with the power you have in your workplace? If so, how did you overcome this and start “owning” your power?

ERIANNE: Owning my power has come with time, work, sacrifice, and the slow realization that my voice is actually really valuable. For years I felt that those in positions of power above and beside me were better, more qualified, and their words carried more weight than mine. I felt lucky to have my position and felt a continual need to learn and grow in order to justify my worth and tackle my insecurities. Through the journey, I’ve been fortunate to always have an internal compass that has empowered me to speak up even in moments when my position was weak and speaking up was risky. These moments have defined my career and have opened doors that I felt were inaccessible. As I’ve worked more and more with executive teams, I’ve finally realized that people in positions of power are just regular people who have been in the game a little longer. These leaders are fallible and can handle being challenged, and good leaders—the type of people I want to work for—embrace feedback and appreciate diverse perspectives. They want me to speak up. The day I embraced my worth and realized I didn’t need to defer to the most powerful person in the room was the day I finally felt whole. I no longer had to pretend to be something or someone I thought I was supposed to be, but rather I had the confidence to be me and trust that my knowledge and perspectives were needed and that I could make a difference.

DEBBIE: Sometimes when I am having a hard time owning my power, feeling it’s too hard and too much responsibility, I find it helpful to step away and look at it as if I was a bystander. I say to myself, “If I was in

charge and coming in fresh, what would I do?” Inevitably, I am able to think of at least a few things that make sense and that I am not doing. Then I try to face the reason I’m not addressing the problems I see. Am I afraid? Am I blocked by something or someone? Do I need more information or help? By stepping outside that power, I have been able to admit when I am intimidated, undecided, or just plain scared of a reasonable action and I can come up with a plan or at least a step that helps me get closer to that integrity of knowing and doing.

PANDORA: In my first leadership position, I equated power with control and vertical authority, and I was resistant. I realized over time that if language creates reality, I was framing power incorrectly and to the detriment of my team. Power is both a positional responsibility and having the confidence within that role to empower others in their positional roles. In my current role, I have the power to make change, move work forward, create opportunities that support contribution, remove road-blocks, help others feel valued, develop new leaders, and drive results I have helped define. Once I named my organizational power in a positive way, the motivation to perform to these expectations increased, as did my commitment to develop my own leadership skills. When I rally the team around meaningful work, every person should go home and feel like, “Thank goodness I showed up today, something would not have happened in the same way if I had not been there!” I own my power when I know each person on my team is saying this to themselves on their drive home.

Have you had situations in which others are uncomfortable with your workplace power? Will you share an example and how you handled it?

MEHRSA: Earlier in my career, when I looked much younger and I was teaching large classrooms full of first-year law students, I felt that they did not respect me. They were pretty obvious about it. I had to develop strategies to deal with this, which included smiling less and being more

formal in the classroom. Over time, this has become easier, but it was really a battle to get students to treat me as a professor. There is this mom/girlfriend trope for female law professors where students treat you as either their mom (expect you to nurture them) or their girlfriend (expect you to be fun and cool, etc.). If female professors do either, they can't have the authority to also teach or mentor. It's been hard to push back against these expectations while also being kind.

DEBBIE: I too experienced more difficulty as a younger woman working in a technology field with a majority of men. I also had to develop a different persona for business interactions that included less playfulness, laughing, smiling, or even socializing, as these were often seen as invitations to not be taken seriously. I found myself being a very different person and I don't think I was wrong to do so. It is appropriate to set boundaries and present a professional front. As I've gotten older, it's actually become easier as I have the confidence to let more of myself come through without sacrificing my credibility. More women have also entered the tech field, which is wonderful, so there are more of us to emulate.

In addition, there are women who also feel threatened by power, which proves difficult when exercising power. I find it is more acceptable to be more straightforward with male members of my team when I ask them to take on a task or when I give feedback than to use the same frank manner with women. Men are just as emotional as women, but the upfront cost of emotional caution just seems higher for women.

Have you experienced any double standards because you're a woman in power—like being considered “bossy” or fielding negative comments about your commitment to family? Will you share an example and how you handled it?

ANJA: I wish I could say no, but even in the most well-intentioned organizations, I think there are some attitudes that are hard to shake

off. I had been counseled that I needed to be more aggressive if I wanted to be seen as a leader. Our COO (a man) adopted me as an informal mentee. He suggested I get some executive coaching to focus on not being seen as so accommodating and collaborative (female qualities). I did not have a great coaching experience with the coach he selected for me to work with. I felt like I was being asked to change my personality to conform to being more like the senior leadership team (more male). It was in discussing my frustration with a peer and colleague that I learned that her experience was completely the reverse. She was in a similar leadership position and was being asked to be less assertive so she would come across as less bossy and easier to work with. It was then that I realized that these were both excuses to keep us at arm's length from the true power.

ERIANNE: I've been very fortunate to have a lot of strong women leaders in my life, but interestingly, very few of these women had children. Because of this, I have always been really cautious about being too open about being a mother. Male colleagues often talk about their children and they are seen as great dads, but when women share anecdotes, we are often viewed as overly sentimental or distracted by our responsibilities at home. I love my children with all of my heart, but when I am at work, I rarely mention them. Being pregnant was difficult to hide, of course, and the years following pregnancies were when I received the comments that were frustrating and demoralizing—that I wouldn't possibly be able to keep up with motherhood and my workload, that I'm less than the men in my department who don't have the same responsibilities, that I was doing surprisingly well for being a wife and mother. I believe it is really important to model a workplace culture that is family-friendly, and I bring my children to my office or to appropriate events so my students, colleagues, and children know the importance of finding work-life harmony and integrating our most important assets into our work. However, when it comes to small talk, I generally focus on what is most important to the people I'm talking with and I shy away from family-centric topics.

As your career roles have increased in responsibility and prestige, has your relationship to religion and/or your religious community changed? If so, how?

MEHRSA: Yes, it's hard to shift from a position of leadership all week to a place where women cannot be top leaders no matter how competent. And I think many members of my community believe that you are not doing it right if you're working. I have felt a lot of judgment by the church community for being a working mom, but I was not surprised by it. I knew when I decided to do both that I was going against what I had been told to do (or not to do), but I had an equally powerful force on the other side—my family culture—telling me that I should have a career.

DEBBIE: I was very lucky that I moved to Cambridge from the DC area about four years into my career. I had three kids already and was finding no solace or direction in the gospel library regarding my innate ambition and professional potential. I was in a mental and spiritual death spiral focused on the anger of disparity between me and my husband in our roles and the betrayal of dreams that had been planted in my girlhood to be ripped away when I became a mother. The women of Cambridge First Ward gave me so many examples of accomplished Mormon women in the workplace, with their families, and in their partnerships that I was able to unwind the conundrums, cling to my positive experiences, and find my own path. It is critical to nurture and uphold this variety so that we can each find joy. I am sometimes disappointed with the power distribution at the higher levels of the Church, but I have found many ways to create, to start something new, pull people together, and do good with my religious community at my local level. And *Exponent II* does a good job of challenging my perspective so I don't get lazy with platitudes I construct and are comfortable to me.

ERIANNE: I believe the power I feel through my career has empowered me to care less about the traditional cultural pressures or perceptions

of judgement that are often so detrimental. I very intentionally embrace the elements of the gospel and Church that I love and do my best to ignore or proactively change the elements that I am frustrated by, and if that's not socially acceptable, I've found myself caring less and less about what others might think and more and more about how to be love-centric in all of my decisions and actions.

Did you have any mentors—especially female mentors—who have helped you progress in your career? How did they help you?

ANJA: I've never had any formal female mentors, but I've definitely looked for women role models wherever I could find them. I am drawn to women who can combine compassion with power and have been fortunate to find many of them in the *Exponent II* community. In the workplace I have found many women who have been able to have a little more of everything (not "have it all") as they balance home and work and personal interests. They don't tend to have the most senior roles, but they do seem to be the most content and fulfilled in their significant roles. I think that has been the key that has sustained me through difficult career moments; when I'm not the managing director at thirty-five and beating myself up for not being as ambitious as I could be, I remember I also have three amazing kids, I love spending time with my husband, and I have hobbies and interests that are just as important or more so than my title or work responsibilities.

ERIANNE: Having strong female mentors has also been really wonderful for me. There are so many women who have paved the way for my generation, and I am grateful for them every day. Our chancellor shared once that she has been told she's too short, she smiles too much, her hair is too short, her hair is too long, her voice is too high, her voice isn't loud enough, etc., and it was so comforting to hear because she is now likely the boss's boss of anyone who might have doubted her ability, appearance, or delivery.

PANDORA: I believe watching and learning from other leaders is critical. I have had many female bosses in my career, but I am particularly grateful for two who have had a tremendous influence on my development and confidence. The first has strong convictions and taught me to speak up but do it in a way that is clear, to the point, and focused on results. She gives feedback that promotes accountability and ensures you feel valued in your contribution. The other is a true feminist who invites discussion around work–life balance and women’s experience. She pushes me to own my longevity as power, leveraging institutional knowledge with the immediacy and relevance of analytics, market, and trend. We also have a very inspirational female CEO. She is brilliant, has a clear vision, and is very direct and open in her interactions. She commands respect in who she is and how she leads. It is exhilarating to see her in action.

At this point in your career, what are you doing to help or mentor other women who are earlier in their careers?

ANJA: So often I still wonder, “What am I doing?” or “What do I want to be when I grow up?” The more I learn and experience, the more I recognize what I don’t know and how much more I still need to grow. I have, however, been told by junior staff that my example of leadership and family commitment has helped them see a path for themselves. I recognize that being more vocal as a potential supporter or advisor would be broadly helpful. Fortunately, my organization has a formal mentorship program and I often get asked to participate. That has allowed me to see myself as having some valuable experience to share and has encouraged me to offer more.

PANDORA: This is a role I have always taken seriously, and I try to engage in supportive conversations any chance I have. Certainly as a leader, one of my focuses is to grow new leaders and I prioritize developmental

activities and discussions. But these have to be backed up by day-to-day feedback, which I give immediately and specifically. It is especially important to help people see and own their strengths and personal power. Knowing what you do well is foundational to true confidence. I do this in and out of my team. I watch others very carefully and when I notice a peer who seems to be struggling, I will engage them with questions. This generally leads to an opportunity for them to talk and space to find their own resolution. I try to apply my own experience only to reinforce or to line up in solidarity; most people don't need answers as much as reassurance that they have the answer after all. I also try to give perspective but am careful to not diminish the unique weight of their current reality. I make time for conversations and interactions with others. When someone says, "But you are so busy . . .," I will assure them that helping them be successful in the organization is the most important work I can do.

MEHRSA: I think this is the most important part of my job right now—to mentor my students and younger scholars. Many come to me to ask for advice and often I take my students aside and try to help them out. I try to help them out in the ways I wish someone had helped me. It's so wonderful to see junior scholars and students thrive. It's much better now than ten or twenty years ago, and I think the more of us who are involved in mentoring, the better it gets for the next group.

ANJA SHAFER {anjakatriina@gmail.com} is the Deputy Chief Development Officer at Accion International. Anja leads the development team, manages institutional partnerships, and oversees fundraising and sustainability efforts for a global nonprofit organization focused on financial inclusion.

DEBORAH THEOBALD {debbie@vecna.com} is co-founder and CEO of Vecna, a leader in healthcare information technology and robotics. Deborah has spent twenty years developing and deploying automation solutions to the health care sector across the globe and has positively impacted millions

of peoples' lives through innovative new technologies that improve access to and quality of care.

In 2009, Deborah established the Vecna Cares Charitable Trust to extend Vecna resources in IP, engineering capacity, and programmatic expertise to developing countries and underserved areas. Deborah is actively engaged in forging new community partnerships around the world with the goal of improving quality and access to health care through the establishment of local, point-of-care patient data tools to regional information technology infrastructures.

Deborah obtained her SB in aerospace engineering from MIT and her master's degree with an emphasis in space robotics from University of Maryland's Space Systems Lab. Deborah is a certified scuba diving instructor and the proud mother of five very active children.

MEHRSA BARADARAN is a professor of law at UCI Law. She writes about banking law, financial inclusion, inequality, and the racial wealth gap. Her scholarship includes the books *How the Other Half Banks* and *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, both published by Harvard University Press. She earned her bachelor's degree *cum laude* from Brigham Young University and her law degree *cum laude* from NYU, where she served as a member of the New York University Law Review.

PANDORA BREWER {pandorabrewer@gmail.com} is the Senior Director of Store Operations at Crate and Barrel. Pandora's team is the interface between the corporate office and stores. She oversees project management, resource development, cross-functional partnership, and escalated store support. She is the managing editor of *Exponent II*. She is also a writer, blogger, and quilter.

ERIANNE WEIGHT {eweight@email.unc.edu} is an associate professor at the University of North Carolina and the director of the Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics. Erianne serves on executive committees of university and national governing bodies to direct policy and growth. She leads grants, consultancies, and research projects to facilitate data-driven decision-making in higher education.

A Found Poem

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

The girl
spotted a pretty pile
of colored sand

on the floor
of the vast hall
and couldn't resist.

Never mind
it was the creation
of eight Tibetan monks

who had spent days
cross-legged on the floor
of Union Station

pouring the sand
into an intricate expression
of their faith.

They were more
than half-way done
with the *mandala*

when they ended
their work for the day
and left.

The girl
showed up
sometime later.

She did
a little tap dance
on it.

—from the *Deseret News*,
KANSAS CITY, Mo., (AP),
Friday, May 25, 2007

Reason Stares

Emily Harris Adams

Brigham is boiling inside
at the audacity of the prophet
who said that God was once
a man.

*Eliza sits and thinks of the greatness
of it all: the potential of man.
That men are children of God,
and like true heirs of their Father,
they will become
all that He is.*

Brigham grasps desperate fingers
around his still-new faith,
a faith made suddenly slippery
with doubt.

*The faith that has been her sustenance
through the miles and marches,
the violence and violations
to mind and body,
swells within her, healing the doubts
that came riding on the heels of the mobs.*

If God was a man, then,
but to Brigham this thought
is almost too horrible to think,
then man could become a God.

*If God was once a man,
then man could become a God.
Her smile has not faded
when suddenly, her jaw drops
as reason leads her to the inevitable
conclusion.*

No, the thought makes reason stare.
For Brigham has seen no man
who could ever be a God.

*Truth is reason,
Truth Eternal tells her:*

If King Follet had not died,
if Joseph Smith had not spoken
at King's funeral,
Lorenzo's little couplet
would not have come back to haunt Brigham.
And Brigham knows this will indeed be a haunting
wrestle with mind and soul
to make himself believe.

That woman can become a God too.

Mother's Blessing

Mette Ivie Harrison

She puts her hands on my head
By the power of the divine womanhood we both share,
And blesses me to love myself, to love others,
To feel power in moving forward,
To see clearly, and kindly.

She blesses me to see Her
Within myself, and within others,
To see Her face when I look in the mirror,
And when I am angry and afraid
Around my sisters and brothers.

She blesses me to let go of past hurts,
And past fears, to dance and sing freely,
To create art that is true and good,
To be the mother I never had,
And always wished for.

Then when she is done with the blessing,
She passes me the oil and tells me it is my turn.
She kneels in front of me,
And waits as I am astonished that she believes
I can do this for her.

On Women and Priesthood Power

Carol Lynn Pearson

A head-scratcher for sure
how to plug us into
your power grid

we round-breast pegs
who don't fit into your
arm-to-the-square holes.

Did you not notice
that we arrived shining
already lit by lightning?

If you studied us
you would not miss the mark.

Step closer.

See us.

Be warmed.

Willing the Storm

Holly Welker

One summer dusk I floated in the swimming pool as billowing
black thunderheads glowered on every horizon, spitting
lightning at the earth as night gathered beyond
them. I willed the monsoon
to come to me—my garden needed rain—but
slowly, so I could enjoy a little longer
the gorgeous electricity scorching the sky even
as I lay immersed in the element that
could conduct that lethal
lightning right to my heart
and halt it.

When the wind picked up, I went inside. Soon torrents
beat my roof, poured from my eaves, softened my soil,
cooled my air. The rain and thunder sang
me to sleep. They were gone when I
awoke, the sky cleansed, even as
detritus littered the earth, power lines
downed and my favorite massive tree
uprooted.

All my life I've been ordered out of pools the moment a storm
is visible, someone declaring the lightning too lethal
no matter the distance, insisting I can't possibly
judge how fast a storm travels,
forbidding me to imitate the thunder,
proclaiming that I dare not put myself at risk
just to admire nature's dangerous elemental beauty.
As if assessing my proximity to danger weren't
something I do every hour,
every day.

So I keep willing storms into my life. Not that I imagine
I control them; but I admire their force,
I respect their inevitability; I'm grateful
for what they replenish. I clean up
after them as I must and hope the damage
is not too dear, the price for
what is green upon the earth
and clean in the air,
this beauty that threatens us,
this beauty that doesn't know we're here.

Self-Portrait in Which I Fail to Hide My Daddy Issues from Google

Allie Spikes

I'm no Mormon but ask Google, *can you take the Mormon out of a once-Mormon?* I'm Mormon. Former stay-at-home Mormon mom. A non-drinker

newly in love with drunk texting,
in love with drunk sighing,
whose newest career is to act

sober. My coffee press
taunts me from the counter; and
I ask Google whether someone can

be both mother and drinker
of coffee and wine, eater
of attention and gaze. Champion

of vacuity. Unreasonable. Seeker of comfort and
cow pasture, swirling wind, and the twitch
of horse muscle under thigh,

purple alfalfa flowers, hail-green sky.
The just-right pressure of nebulizer
mask on my mouth, the rough edge of graphite-

covered callus. In response, Google only offers tips
for alcoholic parents, which I might have offered my dad
or sneakily saved as his homepage

had we known Google a million years ago. He hates
Mormons and loves whiskey. I can't understand how
he feels about me. As a matter of slang,

his god complex seems to reign over
the words we exchange. I still remember
how to play the good girl—to be quiet and still

while he checks a thousand bales—
Google reminds me that hay
should be baled at less than 18%

moisture to avert mold. Mom says dad didn't want me
or my five siblings. Does he disremember that I once rode
that walkable mile? With my thumb smashed in the pickup door

of his dusty vanilla cab, under the headache rack
down a rocky mountain road holding a chain-stringer of
gawking trout, sucking silent tears, the smell of salmon eggs and

cheese through pilled purple sweatshirt until
he shifted to park so I could disappear, in the silver light
of quaking aspens, thumb in mouth. I ask Google why

this poem keeps getting taken over by my dad. On this, Google
gives bad fucking advice dressed in last season's
platitudes from a sleepy suburban mall. The kind a minivan-

driving Mormon mom might buy, overripe, in Goodwill
two towns away, during a late-spring sun shower
the night before the Sabbath. I ask Google, *can children*

survive a split-religion household? Even Google
predictably defers to
Mormon authority on why religious

compatibility matters—my “enter” key depressed
only four short decades too late for my parents
who might’ve but definitely didn’t

think twice about twenty-two years, or 1,144 afternoons
strangled by Sunday fights, that were anything but
confined to the Sabbath, like that one afternoon

when dad snuck me to the car to see *My Best Friend’s Wedding*,
a Sunday Matinee, at the other end of the Kansas highway
against mom’s conviction in the words of an old prophet man

who would frown at my nose ring and tattoo,
demand repentance for my Sunday shopping ritual.
Or that Sunday afternoon dad took me to the farm to ride,

it was the time mom said that mouth full of dirt
and Red’s hoof-shaped gash on my bruised thigh
should be understood as a warning, not to break

the Sabbath again, or like those post-divorce
Sundays, after banishing dad from my life—
God’s will, mom said—for a solid

780 Sabbath days—those dadless Sundays I
broke the Sabbath anyway for nothing
more than a forty-fucking-2-cent pop

from a McDonald's drive-thru where I wanted God
to wear a grease-stained headset and a faded,
too-big polo, where I wanted God to scrub the shit

out of the toilets and look into my eyes and apologize
for serving me Diet Coke instead of Coke,
for offering me ketchup instead of love.

Explaining God the Mother to My Father

Terresa Wellborn

they went to Mount Charleston for the sagebrush the pines
the all-women
prayer circles to hear their own leavened voices
in the name of the Father they howled—

sisters, herbalists, flight attendants, lawyers, piano teachers,
mothers with good intentions
just like me they went to the mountains to stand closer to God
the Mother

can't you see they didn't go to thumb their noses at God
they ascended the mountain
to refuge to find her to call her the color of sky to winny
and shimmer before

her fluttering robes of clouds dappled by her ferocious love
her unmuzzled loneliness
her voice obbligate—

men's distortions dimming with the receding city lights
they eschewed
the vespiary of patriarchy thrust upon them by generations of pioneer
ancestors

my mother never attended you never let her I wish
she would have stood up to you just once
I wish she would have stood up and taken me with her

Issue of Blood

Twila Newey

Last night she lay in bed and read the men's words while blood flowed
and spread like a petal, pooled and ached, red as stymied truth.

Every woman from twelve to sixty could have told them life is
mutable, if they would have asked her—a flutter, a gush, a
screaming love

Born and born and born again. The bloody mess of life and death
transmuting every twenty-eight to thirty-two days. She could
have said

Take this my body, a thousand times over, moaned to all the
potentialities and loss that grew inside her sometimes bodied,

sometimes round as her story ending. Each month reminding her of
this blood a covenant which is poured out for many. But they were
asleep again

in the garden or climbing another mountain in search of finch or
flaming bush. Classifying, prophesying with *I am* always before
them

Her, *a broken open alabaster jar* filled with the *precious ointment of life*
and death, anointing and blessing, anointing and

There are three alternate endings to her story:

1. She smells of unused spices and silent fear
2. She says only what he tells her to say
3. She bears all and they don't believe her

A woman bled for twelve years without ceasing, in seconds, she
became miracle.

A dead twelve-year-old girl rose up and pooled her life in her own
new hands.

Still they said blood is unclean and death is death. Ending number
three then.

The *good news* is we are intimates with liquidity.

The *good news* is that the ground has never been solid.

The *good news* is all these stories are only old strands of thought.

4. The widow tosses her *small copper coins*. *This is but the beginning
of birth pangs.*

Women's Blessing

Melanie Cannon

It wasn't a surprise
when they wrapped their hands
around my body like
chestnut leaves,
linen bindings,
tatted antimacassar lovingly draped,
I was never so finely adorned.

What did surprise me
was the voices of the women,
chiming small and wide,
back and forth,
as if inside
the tower of a Cathedral
and the bells
resounded over me,
my entire body vibrating
to previously unheard chords.

Decades I've walked the earth
and not once known love like this—
encircled by
praying women
washing my parched feet,
anointing my hands,
heads bent as bowing grain,
pleading heaven to come down
on my behalf,
murmuring voices
dripping warm honey
into the wounds.

MARILYN BUSHMAN-CARLTON {marilyncarlton@comcast.net} has published three books of poetry, one children's book of poetry, and a biography. She is currently working on a memoir (of someone else) and more poems. Besides writing, she loves to travel with her one husband, five children, and sixteen grandchildren—sometimes at the same time, but most often not. She loves to read, hike in the nearby mountains, and either chill out on her backyard deck or keep warm inside their home in SunCrest, Utah.

EMILY HARRIS ADAMS {bemmers123@gmail.com} is a poet and writer. Her poetry has appeared in the *New Era*, *Ensign*, *Everyday Mormon Writer*, and the collection *Dove Song: Heavenly Mother in Mormon Poetry*. She is a three-time winner of the Mormon Lit Blitz. Her short story "The Ruins of Tintagel" won the 2018 Segullah prose contest award. Her first book, *For Those With Empty Arms*, was released in 2015. When Emily is not writing, she is usually on adventure with her family somewhere in the Flint Hills of Kansas.

METTE IVIE HARRISON {ironmomm@gmail.com} is the author of the national mystery series beginning with *The Bishop's Wife*, and of *The Book of Laman*, *The Book of Abish*, and *The Women's Book of Mormon*. She holds a PhD in Germanic literature from Princeton University and is an All-American triathlete.

CAROL LYNN PEARSON {carollynnpearson@gmail.com} began her writing career in 1967 with a little book of poetry called *Beginnings*. One of her major works is a one-woman play, *Mother Wove the Morning*, which she performed over three hundred times playing sixteen women throughout history in search of God the Mother. A recent book is *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting the Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men*. In 2019 Carol Lynn received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Mormon Letters. She lives in Walnut Creek, California and can be found at carollynnpearson.com.

HOLLY WELKER {holly.welker@gmail.com} is the editor of *Baring Witness: 36 Mormon Women Talk Candidly about Love, Sex, and Marriage* (2016) and co-editor of *Singing and Dancing to The Book of Mormon: Critical Essays on the Broadway Musical* (2016). Her poetry and prose have appeared in such publications as *Best American Essays*, *Bitch*, the *Iowa Review*, and the *New York Times*.

ALLIE SPIKES {allisonhiccup@gmail.com} is the managing editor of *Bellingham Review* and an MFA candidate at Western Washington University. She holds an MA in English literature and linguistics from Texas Tech University. Her work has been shortlisted for the *Pinch* Literary Awards and is forthcoming or has appeared in *Bellingham Review* and *Literary Mama*.

TERRESA WELLBORN {terresaw@gmail.com} has been published in various journals including *BYU Studies* and *Otis Nebula*, and several anthologies including *Fire in the Pasture* and *Dove Song*. She was the associate poetry editor for *Segullah* for several years and holds a BA in English literature and a master's degree in library and information science. A quintessential bricoleur, she has worked at a public pool, a summer camp, a publishing company, an archive, and all manner of libraries from public to corporate to school. Her trademarks are red lipstick, running, and accordion playing. When not on a mountaintop, she prefers to dwell in possibility.

TWILA NEWEY {twilanewey@gmail.com} received her MFA in creative writing from Naropa University. Her poems have appeared in *Summerset Review*, *Rust & Moth*, *Psalm & Lyre*, *Two Cities Review*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and are forthcoming at *The Cape Rock*, *After the Pause*, and *Radar Poetry*. She has also completed her first novel, a portion of which was published in *Exponent II*. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with Jon, her husband and first reader, and their four children.

MELONIE CANNON {melonie_cannon@yahoo.com} received her BA in English and MEd from the University of Utah and has taught school and writing classes. She is currently assistant poetry editor at *Segullah* and creator of their podcast *Words Fall In*. She is a certified sound healer and leads drum circle and guided meditation classes. She loves spending her time reading, writing, beekeeping, doing voiceover work, walking, praying, baking, costuming, and doing holistic healing. A mother of four lovely children and married to a really good man, Melonie happily spends all of her free time with them.

IN THE GARDEN OF BABEL

Luna Corbden

Eldria is a technician on a team that has unlocked the secret to prayer. The learning machine has labored for years. It has uttered prayers both ancient and fresh, rote and random, then monitored weather patterns for correlated alterations, then refined the words until more significant results occurred. The majority of testing transpired in an unpopulated region of the Tigris Valley, as a compromise made between the Spiritual Research Initiative and the Governing Ethics Division.

She turns from her desk in her shared workroom at the top of the city's tallest tower made of stem-cell ivory, where the windows look down on the densely populated streets of Babel, and pulls a glass oval from the pocket of her silken beige robe. This everstone, her portable connection to the network, includes her work, news from the city, and communication with her loved ones. She reviews what is written within, her brown fingers curled around its edges: The secret to prayer, unlocked at last. The light shines onto her face with the Holy Words through which no entreaty to God can be denied.

Forty times these words were uttered by the machine, and forty times the weather did exactly as the machine commanded. These are simple Adamic words, in her own language but the original dialect, with specific intonations of invocation. And with this knowledge comes not just the key to unlocking sunny days for festivals but, more importantly, the secrets of the universe.

Eldria does not pray in her workroom. Prayer is sacred, and this True Prayer more so. She places the everstone into her pocket and as she rises, the pain in her joints reminds her that she's having a flare again. She digs her fingernails into her palm. It might be selfish, but maybe while she's at it, she will ask for a cure.

She ventures to the secluded meditation gardens an hour's walk west where she can count on solitude and quiet.

The trees in the garden are in bloom. Ivory baskets hang from the arches and along the walls. Fountains babble and add moisture and coolness to the air. Eldria takes a deep breath and draws in the sacred scent of jasmine.

She has spent many years of hours here, her prayers mostly unanswered. Why was she forced to leave home so young? Why must she work such long hours to feed her children? Why can't the heart of her husband be softened so that he will stop screaming at her? What disease afflicted her with recurring pain that the doctors could not identify or cure? Why is the city filled with the hungry and dying? What is the meaning behind all these tests God keeps sending? How can she alleviate suffering?

Dozens of questions not satisfyingly answered by Adamic priests nor the Books of the Prophets, no, not even by the gentle Book of Eve.

Now she leans her back heavily against a flowered tree, pushing away awareness of ache in her wrists and elbows, gazes into the everstone, and quietly utters words she has memorized. She repeats them, muttered just under her breath, over again until she feels them in her heart. Then she stands straight, looks up, and says them in a clear voice that rings upon the paving stones, brings joy to the bricks of wall and statue, and makes the green plants try in their deep hearts to sing along:

"*Pae lae ael!*" Familiar words with strange pronunciation. Her mind repeats back in a more familiar dialect: Oh God, hear the words of my mouth.

The shape of her lips forms the image of God within her single, slow utterance, until another woman rounds the bend in the garden, skin the color of walnut, trailing a long, glimmering gown that captures each ray of light like a garment of white gems. Her face shines with an aura unseen, and the sun bends knee to sing her praises. Every being in this garden *knows* her.

Eldria forgets herself, forgets her request, forgets the words that have brought her to this point. The everstone drops to the dirt forgotten. She falls to her knees and weeps.

“Mother,” she whispers.

It is the presence of God that she has been promised, yet denied, her whole life. Her tears are for the beauty, but also the frustration that it took decades of research and that this sacred experience is reserved only for her because of her tailored education that allowed her to work on such a project.

There is a finger at her chin, lifting her eyes up to face God.

“Be at peace, daughter. Your faith is great. Let your heart be still.”

Eldria’s worries suddenly feel insignificant. Though her questions still burn, her heart fills with unaccountable joy.

“Faith?” she thinks in automatic, silent challenge. “This is science.”

God answers her thought out loud: “Only faith could keep you and your team working such long hours to accomplish an uncommon feat. Arise and commune with me, friend.”

Eldria senses that she is an equal, that bowing and scraping is a thing of men, not of Mother. She stands and miraculously, her knees do not strain in aching resistance against gravity. She marvels at God’s healing presence. She falls again, into the embrace that is waiting for her.

“How long do I have with you?” is her most pressing thought, and it is answered: “I am with you always.”

She steps back. “How?”

Mother smiles. “I can withhold nothing from you. I know that you seek knowledge, whether you can understand it or not. Today, you will surely know the truth of all things. And though I cannot compel you, I must ask for your help in return.”

“Anything!”

“I need you to save my creation.”

For once, Eldria has experienced a prayer that has not left her empty, unheard, though now she only has more questions. No longer

frustrated, she is filled with excitement, as if the questions themselves are holy benediction.

“I will do what I can, as ever. Mother, I serve you.”

“Then I will tell you how I am always with you and always have been. Because I AM you.”

Eldria blinks. She does not understand.

“Walk with me.”

This walled section of the garden features a sandstone brick walkway in the shape of a figure eight.

“You are an intelligent woman,” Mother begins, “so I will explain how this can be. You must understand if you are to help.” God smiles and Eldria’s heart melts with joy. “I know that you are somewhat familiar with dimensional theory?”

Eldria is, but she is surprised. “Yes, I like to think about dimensions, at least. My everstone contains a toy that computes four- and five-dimensional shapes, which appear in the glass. I try to make sense of the counterintuitive spaces they inhabit, how I can drag them through 3D space and watch them appear or disappear seemingly into nothing.”

“Not nothing. Everything.” Mother stops and takes Eldria’s warm hand in hers, complementary earth shades like a Planting Day festival robe.

Eldria pictures the strange polygons as she has moved them within her everstone before. “Everything?”

“Let’s start with something familiar: awareness of the third dimension.” God lets Eldria’s hand go and takes a few steps forward. Eldria follows. “This dimension, here, space goes up, down, sideways, and moving forward in time. You are trapped in forward motion, seeing reality only in terms of momentary pictures. One frame at a time, you are aware only of each passing second. Your only sense of time is now, along with your fragile memory of what has passed. You cannot remember the future, nor can you alter your course backward.”

“As I have read, time is a dimension.”

“Close. Time is not a dimension itself. The dimension is the space in which each frame of time is stored.”

Eldria’s face twists in confusion.

“If there weren’t space for time to go, objects would bump into each other as time passes.” God moves her hand where Eldria had just been standing. “The fourth dimension is the space where each frame of the entire universe can exist without colliding into itself, past or future.”

Eldria can almost picture it. Like a longloaf of bread cut into slices. Each slice fits on the cutting board the way each moment of time fits into some higher space, a space she cannot sense.

“Yes,” God says, reading her thoughts, “this moment is a thin slice of longloaf, but the entire loaf still exists, the way the entire course of time all exists at once in a complicated shape that fills the fourth dimension.”

A tangle of imagery unrolls in Eldria’s head, as if she can almost grasp what it might look like.

“When you are aware of all dimensions, like I am, you are not limited to this one moment. I can sense this shape, or ‘see’ it if you will. It is the shape of this entire reality and all its times, happening all at once. I can perceive time in this way, when I look upon you from the fifth dimension.”

Eldria realizes why these truths are not described in scripture. Without her scientific education, these concepts would confound her.

God continues, “There is an even higher shape. And that is the shape that contains all possible time-shapes that could ever happen.”

“Wait, there are *more* realities? That theory is true?” Eldria shivers. Her worst fear: parallel dimensions with an infinite number of Eldrias, each forking into a new life at each decision point in the timeline. The thought that she isn’t the only Eldria, that she is one of an infinite more, spins her mind in circles.

What does anything matter then? She isn’t special. She isn’t *really* her. If she is not unique, life has no meaning.

"You may not be ready," God says gently. There is no hint of judgment in Her voice, only fact. "Be at peace."

Eldria tries to be ready. She needs and wants to be. This is her one chance. "Tell me."

"You are not just this Eldria. You are *all* Eldrias. A key section of your genetic code creates a vast shape in five-dimensional space that tunes all the yous together into a single Soul. Your Soul is the being that spans all realities. She and you are one."

She is the one Eldria? That was less painful. "I am all of those other versions of me?"

"Yes."

"But . . . why am I only conscious of here, now? What does it matter if we're all the same being if I can only know this?"

"Because of its three-dimensional shape, your mind on this level is only capable of sensing here and now, along with your limited memories of this life. But there is a shape in those higher dimensions, your Soul, or angel, the shape of all your minds across all realities, which can perceive your full existence, the past, present, and future of all realities."

Eldria nods, struggling to process. They begin to walk again.

"There is no analogy to fit your experience, but perhaps your awareness is like a toenail. The toenail is only aware of the toe. But it is still part of the woman." God kicks at a pebble and it bounces down the path, disrupting other pebbles, her toe causing action, reaction.

Eldria furrows her brow. "So there is a version of me that is conscious of all of it? She can see the whole picture?"

"Yes. And just as you are part of her, she is part of me. I am the sum of all souls, across all possible realities, all happening at once, the omniverse. I am God. I am everything. I am you."

"Then . . ." and this question is impossible to put into words, so she thinks it instead. She feels herself seeing out from her eyes, but then pictures an infinite number of herselfs, each seeing out their own eyes, all at once. "Is that how it is?"

“No. Or perhaps, somewhat. Understand that many of these answers are impossible to convey in human tongue, just as you were unable to speak your question. I would show you, but that would injure your mind. For now, you must try to understand using your three-dimensional senses.”

“Is it that I have to live every life, in sequence, painstaking each step through each existence, until eternity runs out?” There is exhaustion in this thought, but also adventure. All the things she’s wanted to try, all the times she’s pondered about where she’d be if she’d made different choices.

Mother laughs. “Eternity never runs out. That’s the way we all wanted it.”

“Even this? Even the suffering? We wanted this?” Since God appeared, Eldria hasn’t felt the ache like bone rubbing against bone; in all the excitement, she has forgotten about it, or perhaps she has been cured by God’s presence.

But outside the garden, there are the sick, the hungry, the imprisoned, the lonely . . . Pain!

God muses for a moment.

“A parable then, the great teaching tool.” The tenor of God’s voice changes, as if on stage, and She makes grand sweeping motions with Her hands as they walk, as though She could reveal the nature of reality by drawing attention to it.

“Once there was a great queen who possessed magical powers. Anything she wished would happen in an instant. She explored every pleasure known. Day in and day out, she did nothing but whatever she pleased—dancing, music, festivals, sex, intoxication, art, food, company, sightseeing, whatever she wanted.

“Eventually, she had done everything a billion times over, and she grew bored. So one day, she wished for a surprise, just a little one. A moment later, a bird dropped a white mess directly upon her nose, and, startled, she laughed in delight before returning to her wine.

“The next day, she wished for another surprise, so that night, while sleepily dancing as she had a trillion times, she slipped and broke her ankle.

“Filled with joy, and not a little pain, she repeated the wish. Over and over, surprise after surprise, wishing to not know what is going to happen, increasing in elaborateness and frequency, until, at long last, she ended up standing before me today, talking to God.”

Amazement spreads on Eldria’s face as the meaning sinks in.

“You mean . . .”

“This parable is *your* story. This is the story of all human Souls. You are that queen, my sweet Eldria. You can have any wish, and so this life of surprises, this awareness, your sense of this isolated moment where you are blind to the future, this is your wish.”

Eldria thinks to the worst moment of her life, when she felt the most worthless, that day her father forced her to leave home, shoved her stumbling out the front door for the sin of disobedience, after weeks of fighting because she would not attend Sabbath Worship for fear of an Adamic priest there who could not keep his hands to himself. The sting of fear, rejection, abandonment, betrayal of her safety, it stabs her like a knife, as if it had happened yesterday.

She is filled with anger and does not hesitate to test God on this point. “You’re saying I *chose* this suffering? What kind of victim-blaming nons—”

“This and every other moment of every other reality your Soul inhabits. You are living *all* types of lives. Realities in which you live comfortably for hundreds of years, in which you die of starvation as a baby, where you are happy, where you are tortured, where you are powerful, where you weep in the mud and desolation. Across all these lives, in every moment, pleasant or unpleasant, from within your Soul, you have chosen this infinite eternity of surprises.”

“Then why . . . why wouldn’t I snap awake right now in that place where I live best? Why wouldn’t I just run in circles, replaying those happy frames again and again?”

“Because then it wouldn’t be a surprise . . .”

God trails off, stooping to the ground to examine an ant who is tugging at a seed far larger than it. “There is one more reason, if you can handle this truth.”

Eldria takes a deep breath, stands, steps back. A bird swoops down and steals both the seed and the ant.

“In all of those realities where you have no worries . . . you are doing so at someone else’s great expense. In every single one.”

Eldria’s mouth falls open. “I would never—”

“You would. You have committed every sin, an infinite number of times, in an infinite number of ways. You have k—”

Eldria does not want to know it. “I understand. I can’t believe it, but . . . infinite is infinite.”

“More than that, daughter.” Her voice is filled with love, a love that knows no conditions, a love that contains all the knowledge of every horrible thing Eldria has done across the realities, every bad choice, and yet there is only acceptance. No pressure to change, no clicking of the tongue, no furrowed brow of disapproval. The sense of love that fills the air remains. God knows all and accepts all, because *She is all*. Eldria realizes that for God to condemn the lowest action committed by the lowest of people, God would be judging Herself.

God places Her hands on Eldria’s shoulders and looks with deep intent into her eyes. “Child, you are every side of every coin, and every coin that is the edge of every sword.

“You are the person who suffers, but you are also the person who causes suffering. You are the creator and the destroyer, healer and murderer, oppressor and oppressed, the breaker of hearts and the heart who is broken. Your spiritual balance is the average sum of infinity plus infinity.”

God drops Her hands and Eldria looks to the ground. She says in a soft voice, “I choose the suffering, and I choose the beauty.”

“There must needs be opposition in all things. You cannot know the sweet without tasting the bitter.”

“Eden,” Eldria whispers.

God bursts out laughing, then apologizes at Eldria’s hurt look. “I am laughing in surprise. See, this is why I went along with your plan, you children. So that I can be surprised, too.”

“What is funny?”

“That you figured it out. Yes, Eden. That is where it happened. That is where this choice was made.”

“Eve made the choice for all of us?” The Book of Eve left out such details, though its authorship was disputed.

“No, each of you made your own choice, individually, in your own time. Eden is the story of all of you. For Eve, yes, she made it in a garden called Eden. That story is basically true. Even the talking snake. She likes snakes; they give excellent advice.”

As if on cue, a tiny brown serpent gives up its sunning place and silently crosses the path.

“For you, Eldria? You were bathing alone in a marble pool. It is possible to die of boredom. You could have wished yourself out of existence. This was an easy choice for you.”

Eldria thinks about how she sure would love a scented bath in a marble pool. There is a long quiet.

“Speaking of opposition . . .” God prompts.

“Yes. You need help.” If struggle and sin occur down here, it must happen on an epic scale among Souls. Or angels? Are they the same thing? Eldria tries to imagine an interdimensional war and fails.

God follows a sparrow with Her eyes, high up in the clouds. God then faces Eldria. “Sadly, your discovery that summoned me here today, it threatens to destroy this balance I have created within me—that your Soul has created within you.”

Eldria thinks about God looking inside Herself and changing the fundamental rules to accord with the wishes of Her children, as if she herself could alter the course of the blood within her veins.

“Other people will access this True Tongue prayer discovered by your machine. They will know it, and with it can pray for anything, even the impossible, because with God, nothing is impossible.”

God does not need to tell her: They could use it to change the system once again. They could remove free will; they could destroy the surprises. They could even destroy everything.

The weight of these words, *pae lae ael*, sinks into Eldria and she realizes that the parable God told her was, in this moment, quite literal. She can have anything she wants, forever.

They have circled back around and Eldria stoops to pick up her everstone, surprised once again at the absence of pain in her knees.

“How can I help?”

“O God, hear the words of my mouth.” She says it in Eldria’s dialect, an awkward clunky phrase now that she has uttered the true version.

So this is it. In school, the priestesses warned her of godly tests with eternal consequences, yet here it was, manifest. She could use her power of prayer to whisk herself away from all her worries into a land of eternal bliss, or skip all that to save the world by . . . by doing what?

“I could delete the prayer from our systems.”

“Not enough.” She shook Her head. “They will have power over time.”

“I could pray that we never discovered this prayer. Our machine failed before it found the answer, or we didn’t get funding.”

Mother shook Her head again. “They can access other timelines.”

Eldria closes her mouth and thinks hard.

“God, what should I do?”

“There is only one thing you can do: Rewrite the omniverse.”

“Change the rules? Like you did?”

“Like you did. Like we did.”

“Across all realities, all possibilities.” Eldria blinks with determination. “We must remove these words from the Adamic language. No, not

just the words, because other words could be found, synonyms to write a new prayer. No, we have to destroy the language, all of it. Obliterate the words from all minds that have ever lived.”

God nods.

“Including yours.”

Eldria knows that when she destroys the language, she will destroy this prayer. Its power will fail, and she will be left alone to her problems and pain and unanswered questions once more, Mother gone. The idea of that void, now that she has tasted God’s presence, fills her with dread. She yearns to be with Mother forever, instead of that sinking aloneness that has been within her her whole life.

Except not alone. Because God is her, and she is God.

“Can I fly first? Just once?”

Mother knows what she means by the word “fly.”

“You know enough now. I will show you.”

Eldria rises “up,” though “up” is not the right idea, merely a concept she can relate to. “Up” she goes, out of the third dimensional aspect of Reality Number JHB-16475BX9∞R7 into the fifth, where she can see her whole life at once, her body winding like a snake from birth to death, and all within a much larger shape of planet Earth spinning like a spiral pipe throughout time as it orbits a sun, which is also a spiral pipe orbiting the galaxy center, and nothing bumps into anything else, because it moves into a new moment, and there is room for all things to happen all at once without colliding.

She rises further, and she is her Soul, dual awarenesses of Earth-Eldria and Eternal-Eldria merging, the thoughts in her head becoming overwhelming, incomprehensible, burning and searing painfully because they are too big to fit into her small awareness, because all times and all places of her being are trying to fit in her three-dimensional mind. She senses all her other selves everywhere, and there is a desire to descend into any one of them, just to relax from the overwhelming crush of this too-large way of being.

“Goodbye, Mother.” Eldria weeps from a million eyes. A billion times a billion versions of Eldria are suddenly sad without knowing why.

God kisses her on her forehead.

“*Pae lae ael!*” Eldria utters, her mouth a fifth-dimensional shape of vortexes and tesseractes. “O God! Remove these words from all existence. Remove this Adamic language from every time and place. Lift the power from this Pure Prayer. May we forever be cut off from the power to compel God to any action.”

And with that, Eldria is alone in the garden of Babel.

Her heart utters a silent prayer, and it is answered with warmth. There is a connection, soft and sure, not just to God, but also to the beetle that has landed on her wrist, to the olive tree that shades her, to the gardener she can hear working on the other side of the wall, to the people in the city, like so many mustard seeds.

They are all gods, as she is God, and this fills her with purpose. It blunts the pain of absence, because she is not alone.

LUNA CORBDEN {luna@corbden.com} (who also writes as Luna Lindsey) lives in Washington State. They are autistic, genderfluid, and post-Mormon. Their first story, about a hippopotamus, crawled out of their head at age four. After running out of things to say about hippopotami, they switched to sci-fi, fantasy, and horror. Their stories have appeared in the *Journal of Unlikely Entomology*, *Penumbra eMag*, and *Crossed Genres*. They tweet like a bird @corbden and blog about Mormonism at www.recoveringagency.com. Their novel, *Emerald City Dreamer*, is about faeries in Seattle and the women who hunt them.

THE NAPE OF MY NECK

Keira Shae

I was scheduled to be naked at ten in the morning on Saturday.

This was a conflict with my uber-religious community and my lifetime of body shame. I drove to the studio anyway.

The artist greeted me at the door, and his surroundings were chaos. Wrapping from large blocks of clay, several canvases leaned against a wall, frames with nothing to showcase, and in contrast, Jesus staring down from the adjacent wall.

I tried to ignore all of that while clutching my robe.

He led me to a screen where I was instructed to fully undress, then I was abandoned as he went in search of fresh clay.

I had been naked many times before. Doctors had examined me. My husband had ravaged me. Children had interrupted me.

But I had never been simply a work of art.

I stared down at my lumpy, striped body with evidence of its seasons all over. There was a line between my eyebrows that grew deeper with each stress a new child brought. The thousand sleepless nights bundled up underneath my eyes. In my winters, I frowned in my agony so many times, it created canyons around my mouth. The shine left my hair but there were silvery streaks along my haunches and flat buttocks from my swollen summers. My powerful arms had held the world up, and they were chiseled, but in contrast, my stomach was doughy. I really hated my dead-fish breasts, its eyes facing the floor.

I was determined to disrobe my shame as well, and so I left it behind the screen and stepped out.

The artist did not glance up from his clay. I was relieved that I was normal for him and dismayed that I was normal for him.

He explained the pose and then, after looking at my frame once, packed more clay. I ignored Shame, who was tweeting from the corner about that.

My fellow worker had told me that he would ask me about myself to make me more comfortable. Apparently he was shy and easy to simply talk at.

I loved shy people. It meant I had a maze to solve before the puzzle unlocked and they shared their beautiful inner lives. I was a very warm and charming person.

He instructed me, then fell silent.

I jumped at the opportunity. I asked him where he was from. What his wife thought of his work. Why he chose to do these sculptures. I searched his studio for clues.

I saw Jesuses lined up everywhere. "You paint the Lord a lot," I offered.

He nodded.

"Do you paint from personal experience, like you sculpt women's bodies?" I teasingly mused.

He snorted a laugh. "No, I would have to be a much better person to do that."

I had thought that, too. An answer from God was all I had ever wanted. No amount of praying, begging, serving, rebelling, meditating, or theorizing ever changed that. It was a realization that broke my soul. I could challenge him that no one really merits a visit from the divine. If they did, surely I would have had answers to my prayers long ago.

I also thought about commenting on the degree of holiness in sculpting a woman's creative body. It could be akin to a visit from Jesus.

I decided to give a sermon on neither and fell silent.

He offered to play some music. I requested a favorite song, and once it finished, other similar songs flooded his studio. One especially favorite one came on and I groaned with happiness.

"How appropriate."

“What?” he asked without looking.

“This song. It’s called, ‘To Build a Home.’” I offered. He glanced at the device before returning to his work. “When you’ve been homeless, you learn that the only home you really have is your body.”

He stopped sculpting for a moment at that. I didn’t want to meet his gaze anymore. I gazed around at all his works.

“And these bodies are so beautiful, aren’t they?” I asked.

He said nothing, back to his work.

I was winning. I swallowed some water and returned to my pose.

“Have you ever posed?”

He nodded. “My wife is an artist as well. She and I have posed for each other in poorer days.”

“She must be glad to be relieved of the work,” I joked.

He laughed in agreement. Conversation just like that filled our Saturday.

I warmed him up with questions about his children.

“Are any of your children . . .” I searched his face and met his eyes, “artists, too?”

He rubbed his cheek with the back of his hand, clay coloring his palms brick red. “Maybe Maddy, it’s too young to tell . . . but Mikey, I think he’s genuinely interested.”

He paused before mentioning their names, already slipping by saying one of his sons was named after him. Privacy in this day and age was expensive. I knew—but he did not know I knew—that he was a split identity. He had a pseudonym for his statue work and another name for his religious work. He was risking his family’s religious reputation, large home, and income just to follow his true passion. All of this I knew. Even if I didn’t, I could smell it in the sweat on his skin.

His real name was Michael.

He tried to turn the conversation to me and failed at seeming authentic.

He asked me the name of my only son.

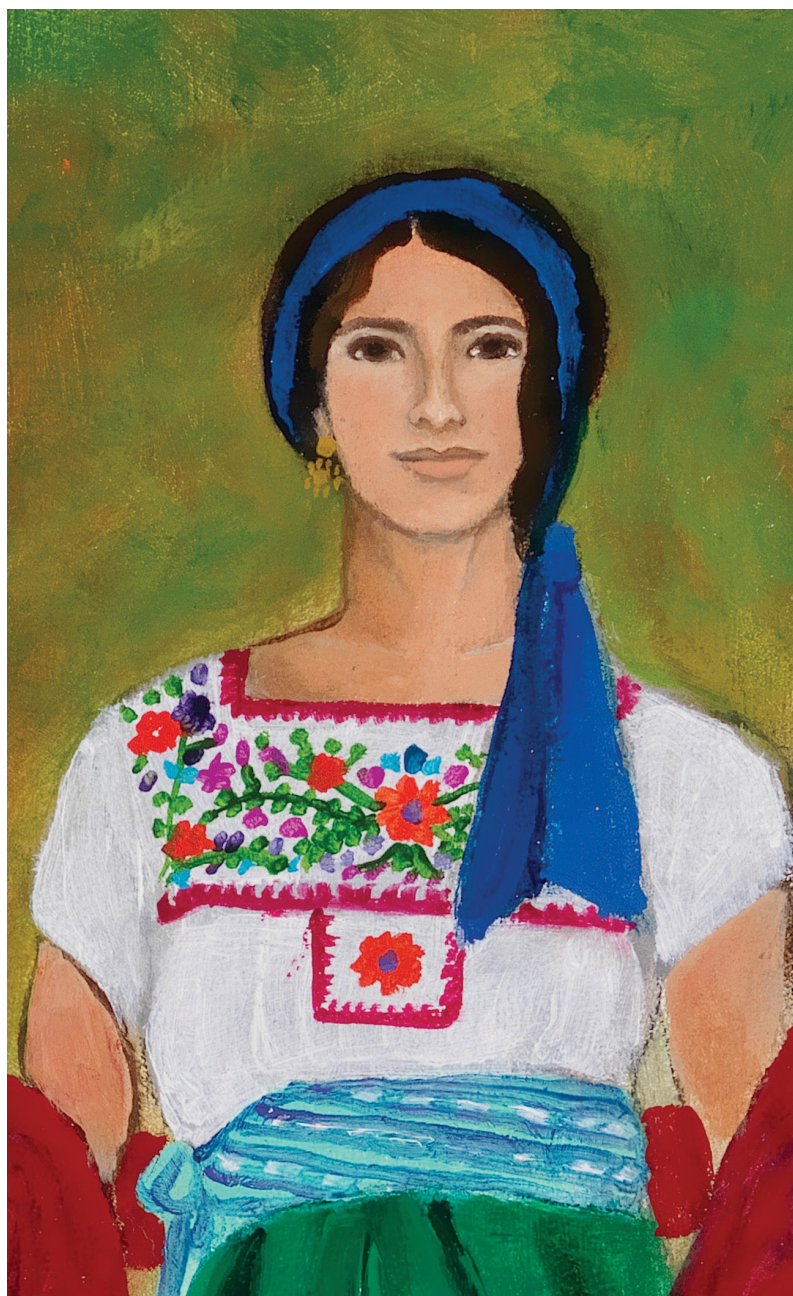
“It’s Michael.” I looked him straight in the eye.

He sat stunned for a full few seconds. He hunched again.

When he finished, and I dressed, I shook his hand and looked him in the eye. He did not meet my gaze.

How strange, I thought to myself. I was not the one naked today at all.

KEIRA SHAE {keirashaeauthor@gmail.com} was born in 1988. Keira grew up in a poverty-stricken family in Provo, Utah and encountered abuse, drugs, prostitution, and family separation in the shadow of the temple and the LDS Church’s flagship university. Shae experienced kindness from an LDS foster family as a teen, which changed the trajectory of her life. Through police records, lifelong journaling, and court documents, she built a narrative for her transcendent true story. After Leonard Cohen’s lyrics, Shae titled her debut memoir *How The Light Gets In*.



Michelle Franzoni Thorley
Family History and Temple Work (detail, central figure)
oil on canvas

Note from the Book Review Editors: What does it look like for women to take power over their own lives or over the lives of others? We see that world through a glass darkly, given the ways in which the ubiquitous infrastructure of patriarchy has shaped our assumptions, our language, and our very thought patterns. Literature, however, can draw us into differently imagined social ecosystems and give us a glimpse of a Zion society in which agency is more equitably distributed across individuals and communities. Both fiction and nonfiction help us explore the boundaries of agency within different structures of power.

Our book reviews explore the theme of women negotiating imbalances of power as well as claiming power in their lives and in their narratives. The reviews deliberately venture into genres that are popular with readers but less represented with reviewers, take a broader view of a field, or reexamine older publications with a new lens. The results are often unexpected, both in the effects they aim for and how they choose to achieve them. While some women use power to control, others use it to forgive, to fall in love, to follow freedom, or to find faith.

Madi Markle Moss invites us to allow more space in our literary world for romance novels, while Katherine Cowley does the same for young adult fiction. The books they review are not about Mormons, nor are they marketed to them; they are examples of a different kind of narrative coming from Mormon women writers that are worth a second look. Charlotte Hansen Terry offers a rich sampler of the many recent publications that have been filling in a heretofore sparse landscape of Mormon women's lives, experiences, voices, and scholarship. The section concludes with Meg Conley's reread of a genre-defying offering from LDS writer-artist Ashley Mae Hoiland. Enjoy.



When Was the Last Time You Read a Romance Novel?

Ilima Todd. *A Song for the Stars*. Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2019. 304 pp. Paperback: \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-62972-528-4.

Reviewed by Madi Markle Moss

The desire to read emphasizes a basic generosity toward the Other that is the condition of all language. As Donald Davidson has argued, entering into language involves us in what he calls the “principle of charity,” an assumption that other people are intelligible and that they have something worthwhile to say. . . . The impulse to read, therefore, insists on the necessity of the Other—on our need for, fascination with, surprise by, dependence on others—even in moments of the most intense privacy and self-attention.

—Daniel Coleman¹

When was the last time you read a romance novel?

My answer does not count. I recently read three for the sole purpose of finding one to review, but the previous time was certainly before college. In my English major we talked big talk about expanding the canon of literature, but even popular fiction courses left out romance novels. This canonical oversight is doubly so for the genre’s sexless subcategory that populates Utah bookshelves. Yet, these are the books I see at family gatherings when my cousin’s wife can steal a few moments away from her boisterous boys. These are the books my sisters will actually read, and that my high school best friend would slip me from her private collection so that we could live vicarious lives.

1. Daniel Coleman, *In Bed with the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 14–15.

We saw in these books something worthwhile. The books provided what we wanted, whether it was sweet, sweet alone time, the joy of reading, or a love life (of sorts). Reading romance was our claim to something more, and to treat the genre as formulaic cheese-puff reading risks discounting what the female readers, female authors, and female protagonists have claimed for themselves.

Take, for example, Ilima Todd's *A Song for the Stars*. Given that it was issued as part of Shadow Mountain's Proper Romance series, I assure you that this novel has the romance your reading heart has missed. The protagonist, Maile, is the daughter of a Hawaiian chief and against all odds falls for a foreign sailor landed on their shores. As far as I can tell, this novel is the first Proper Romance to not be about a white woman, which is also amazing for a romance sitting on a Deseret Book shelf.

In the book's acknowledgements, Todd cites a 2012 writing workshop that inspired her to tell the story of her fourth-great-grandparents. This story did not fit Todd's established genre of YA science fiction, though, and remained a side project worked on in stolen moments. It was not until her editors asked for a Hawaiian romance that Todd felt permission to write the book she dreamed of. Writing this book, to me, seems like Todd claiming space for her own ideas and the power to write her way into other genres, even if it took leaving the space in which she believed she belonged.

The story begins just before Captain James Cook and crew return to Hawaii in 1779, making the historical fiction just as much about "the contrast of two cultures colliding for the first time" (290) as it is about romance. Todd combines the story of the British captain's subsequent death with the meeting of Todd's ancestors, chiefess Papapaunauapu (referred to as "Maile" in the book) and British naval officer John Harbottle. The twist: John kills a man responsible for Captain Cook's death in front of Maile, the fiancée of the now deceased man.

I am completely unsettled by the forgiveness and romance that blooms between Maile and John. While Maile slices John's chest and abducts him, she shortly thereafter tends to the wound she's caused and becomes John's protector. She even teaches John the navigational skills that her fiancé taught her, which is either a full-circle moment or one that walks close to disrespecting the dead. In either case, Maile learns about circumstances justifying the otherwise unjustifiable actions that she and John have taken. Oh, and she learns to love again (this *is* a romance novel).

Circling back to Maile's fiancé, Ikaika, it is worth noting that he is not a one-dimensional man-prop blocking the would-be lovers (RIP Kocoum from Disney's *Pocahontas*), but a fleshed-out friend and companion to Maile. His death is a loss. I knew from the back cover that he would die, but it was still refreshing to feel the moment when it came. Ikaika's loss remains palpable throughout the remainder of the novel, and Maile deals with the double-guilt of a survivor loving after love and learning to love the man responsible for her past love's death.

Still, Maile claims power over her circumstances and more power in her partnering. While Maile and Ikaika's relationship was positive, Ikaika was the teacher and Maile the student. In Maile and John's relationship, Maile is fully in command. In order to claim this autonomy for herself, Maile first overcomes her distrust of the Other. She works through her negative feelings toward otherness to a place of questioning, learning, and mutuality. She exercises the "principle of charity" spoken of by Daniel Coleman and claims power through realization of her "need for, fascination with, surprise by, [and] dependence on others."²

Unsettled is a good word for this story because while the surface is a romance, just beneath the waves you see the other European sailors'

2. Ibid.

disregard for the Hawaiian people and their culture—a harbinger of exploitation to come. This makes it hard at times to root for John even though he begins as a good man and then ends as a good man who better understands the culture and is in love with Maile. The real character growth is Maile's, and with her in center focus it becomes easier to accept that John's presence can be both good for her and good for her people and see that the long-term consequences of external forces on the islands do not need to be part of her story in order for it to be worth telling.

Maile's story as it is easily sets up the outside critical discussion of colonialism, power dynamics, and the extent to which we are willing to forgive. The fact that the story involves romance formulas does not make it inferior but rather more accessible to a lay audience, which should democratize the conversation rather than close it off.

So, when was the last time *you* read a romance novel?

Romance is a room of women readers, authors, and protagonists that you do not need to visit in order for it to have worth, but the door is always open.

MADI MARKLE MOSS {madimarkle@gmail.com} is a third-year law student at the J. Reuben Clark Law School. She received her BA in English from Brigham Young University, with minors in creative writing and Russian. She and her husband are anxiously expecting their firstborn in the grad school wilderness.



A Rising Generation: Women in Power in Young Adult Novels

Jo Cassidy. *Good Girls Stay Quiet*. Monster Ivy Publishing, 2018. 338 pp. Paperback: \$12.50. ISBN: 978-1948095112.

Emily R. King. *Before the Broken Star*. New York: Skyscape, 2019. 300 pp. Paperback: \$8.49. ISBN: 978-1542043762.

Julie Berry. *Lovely War*. New York: Viking, 2019. 480 pp. Paperback: \$10.99. ISBN: 978-0451469939.

Reviewed by Katherine Cowley

In August 2019, a study by *The Bookseller* showed that in the United Kingdom, “children’s books account for just 4.9% of review space, despite making up a third of the market.”¹ While no such study has been done about young adult literature by Mormon authors, the results would likely be skewed in a similar manner. Often, when Mormon authors—especially Mormon women—say they write young adult fiction, they and their work are instantly dismissed. (“So you write silly vampire stories?” is a common refrain.)

Teenage girls often have little power in their lives. Both secular and religious communities circumscribe what they can do and what they can dream of becoming. Philosopher Micah Tillman suggests that when we dismiss young adult novels, we often justify it by claiming the works are “defective or inferior,” yet what we are truly demonstrating is that we “dislike young adults” and find the teenage experience and

1. Kiera O’Brien, “Books in the Media: Children’s Books Account for 4.9% of Review Space,” *The Bookseller*, Aug. 16, 2019, <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/book-reviews-childrens-books-in-media-sally-rooney-1067336>.

perspective “repulsive.”² We trivialize young women and mock their lack of power when we look down on the literature that could empower them.

Good Girls Stay Quiet by Jo Cassidy is a fast-paced YA thriller. The main character is fifteen-year-old Cora Snow, a girl who was kidnapped as a young child and for over a decade has been held captive by “Daddy,” a man who is extremely physically and emotionally (though not sexually) abusive. While at school, Cora carefully follows Daddy’s rules: stay quiet and don’t make friends. Her only outlet is her journal, where she testifies of her life and tells the truth of her experience rather than performing her normal, life-saving pretense of being a happy, good, submissive girl.

When Cora’s journal is stolen, she attempts to get it back, and in the process she must seek power in ways that parallel common teenage experiences: artistic independence, which leads to financial independence; freedom of movement (sneaking out of her prison-like bedroom in the middle of the night); freedom of communication (a hidden burner phone); freedom to have friends; and freedom to use her own body outside of prescribed norms (Daddy has taught her to never talk to, touch, or kiss boys). The most heartbreaking parts of the novel are not the scenes in which her kidnapper beats, starves, and imprisons her, but rather the scenes where Cora believes his lies, believes she should be powerless, and believes she has brought all her pains upon herself. Ultimately, no man or woman can save Cora—she has to liberate herself by sharing her voice and her truth to the world.

Before the Broken Star by Emily R. King is a YA fantasy adventure novel set in an alternate world. From the surface it seems like there is relative equality between the sexes: women may not be in the military, but they do engage in prize-fighting, and of the two main power-holding antagonists in the book, one is female (the Queen) and the other is

2. Micah Tillman, “Why People Hate YA Novels,” Nov. 4, 2016, <https://micahillman.com/why-people-hate-ya-novels/>.

male (the Admiral). Yet power is wielded as a sword (both literally and figuratively) throughout the story, and removing power or choice from others is a common tool used to gain power.

The main character, Everley Donovan, grows up in tragedy; her entire family was assassinated by the famous admiral Killian Markham. She herself was stabbed through the heart and saved only by the installation of an artificial, clockwork heart. Everley defies the advice of others and intentionally gives up her freedom in order to be sent with a group of criminal women to a penal colony so that she can take revenge on her family's murderer. Not only does she sacrifice freedom to achieve her goal, but others restrict her choices as well: those around her assume that Everley does not have the perspective, knowledge, or abilities to control her future, and they fear where her chosen path will lead.

A common trope in fantasy novels is that the main character gains power by accessing and mastering some sort of magical power. This is not the case in *Before the Broken Star*; while Everley eventually wields some limited magical influence, she mostly gains power through sharing and withholding truths, building friendships and networks, storytelling, sword fighting, negotiating power structures, and protecting those without power. She must overcome her fear of becoming close to others and stop hiding the things that make her distinctive, as well as learn to see beyond her own perspective and admit her own fallibility.

As she grows in power, Everley moves from chains to a leadership position on a dangerous island quest. Yet time and time again, she is faced with key questions: Can you stop a monster without becoming monstrous? Can you become powerful without harming others? Can you make change without becoming what you are trying to destroy? As Everley wields power, she risks everything she holds dear, but she also opens up a world of new possibilities.

Lovely War is a stunning work of young adult historical fiction by award-winning author Julie Berry. It is partly a love story, as it follows two young couples during the Great War through love, tragedy,

racism, and liberation. Yet it is also a commentary on storytelling and the relevance—nay, necessity—of traditionally female approaches to storytelling.

Lovely War employs an innovative point of view, framing the historical narrative with a tale of Greek deities during the First World War: Hephaestus has used a magic golden net to capture his unfaithful wife Aphrodite, goddess of love, and her lover Ares, god of war. Hephaestus puts them on trial and Aphrodite immediately seizes control of the situation by unabashedly admitting her guilt and then accusing her husband: “You think my work is stupid.” (Hephaestus admits—albeit only to the reader—that he finds her focus on human relationships “inconsequential.”) Aphrodite’s defense is to tell two love stories, which leads to great protests by the imprisoned Ares, who has no interest in love letters, kisses, or descriptive details. Hephaestus agrees to listen, in part because his interest has been piqued and in part because he wants to differentiate himself from his wife’s lover. And so Aphrodite begins her tale, focusing first on her main female protagonist before bringing in the other characters. In the process she enlists Ares to tell short stories about her characters in the context of war; Apollo to tell stories of poetry, music, and plague; and Hades to tell stories of death. Each godly narrator brings a different set of perspectives and priorities to the central story.

Even as Ares, Hades, and Apollo add their own parts to the story, Aphrodite controls the narrative: this is *her* story, not theirs. It is a story that is often dismissed: in the thousands of years that she has spent with her husband and her lover, neither of them have ever taken the opportunity to understand her, to appreciate her as an individual, or to see her as she is. Through her detailed, nuanced retelling of four World War I journeys, Aphrodite will not let the other gods—or us, as her readers—dismiss her tale as “just a love story.” This *female* narrative is what creates meaning through war and death. Making the predominant storyteller viewpoint that of a goddess is particularly interesting

from a Mormon perspective as we come to understand the necessity of making Heavenly Mother not just another component but an *essential* component of our doctrine and worship.

Good Girls Stay Quiet, *Before the Broken Star*, and *Lovely War* are three excellent examples of Mormon women creating innovative narratives about women and power. Being willing to move beyond a focus on adult literary fiction and exploring popular genre literature written specifically for young women and girls allows us to appreciate the empowering work being done for a rising generation of women.

KATHERINE COWLEY {cowley.k.e@gmail.com} lives with her husband and three daughters in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her short stories earned first place in the Mormon Lit Blitz and in *Segullah's* annual writing contest. She guest edited the 2016 Mormon Lit Blitz and the 2019 Around the World in Mormon Lit contest, and she is on the board of directors for Mormon Lit Lab. Her novella "Tatterhood and the Prince's Hand" appears in the anthology *Unspun: A Collection of Tattered Fairy Tales*. Her stories have also been published in *Defenestration*, *Mad Scientist Journal*, *365 Tomorrows*, and *Steel and Bone*. She teaches writing at Western Michigan University.



Tipping the Scales: LDS Women and Power in Recent Scholarship

Charlotte Hansen Terry

How history is framed and whose stories are told by an institution reveals much about its paradigms and priorities. From a survey of the past few years of history and Mormon studies materials published about (and even by) the Church, it seems the scales of gender representation are gradually tipping toward a better balance. This recent scholarship relies on important foundations laid by contributors like

Lavina Fielding Anderson, Valeen Tippetts Avery, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Jill Mulvay Derr, Martha Sonntag Bradley-Evans, Maxine Hanks, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and Linda King Newell. The selection that follows shows a gratifyingly rapid expansion of research on Mormon women and their diverse relationships to power. You may want to add some of these to your shelves.

The First Fifty Years of Relief Society (Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, editors, Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016) provides essential documents for understanding women and their organizations in the nineteenth century. The full Nauvoo Relief Society minutes can be found here, along with minutes and discourses from the beginnings of the Young Women and Primary programs. This work took decades to come to fruition and is especially helpful to scholars working on the nineteenth-century Church. The nature of the material may be cumbersome for the lay reader, but the section introductions are great summaries of key historical moments. *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017) contains discourses and contextual information on selected sermons by women both familiar and obscure, from Lucy Mack Smith in 1831 to Kenyan member Gladys N. Sitati in 2016. This book is more devotional in its intent than scholarly but offers an unprecedented collection of faithful LDS women's voices while giving them historical context. Both volumes are available free online (churchhistorianspress.org), and some material has also been translated into other languages. Hopefully these works will find their way into Church instructional manuals to further broaden their reach.

Outside the publishing arms of the Church, recent biographers have explored how individual women have wielded what power they had within the institution. In *A Faded Legacy: Amy Brown Lyman and Mormon Women's Activism, 1872–1959* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015), David Hall uses his access to institutional sources

from the Relief Society to offer important insights on Lyman's many years of leadership in that auxiliary and the inner workings of the organization. We read about significant institutional changes instigated by women in the early-twentieth-century Church, such as launching the welfare programs of the Church, along with the important power dynamics Lyman encountered after her husband's excommunication and the loss of control by the Relief Society of the welfare programs they birthed. In *Emmeline B. Wells: An Intimate History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017), Carol Cornwall Madsen uses Relief Society general president Emmeline B. Wells's journals to reveal the complexities of her relationships with other women and male Church leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the Lyman biography, this book also provides important details about the gendered power dynamics of a specific historical period, showing the misgivings and struggles that Wells encountered as she worked to expand the power of the Relief Society and women's rights in general.

In addition to these biographies of women with formal titles, other scholars have excavated the lives of women who challenged the institution of the Church from outside the leadership structure. *Helen Andelin and the Fascinating Womanhood Movement* (Julie Debra Neuffer, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014) explores the Mormon underpinnings of Andelin's life work. She self-published *Fascinating Womanhood* and encouraged church communities to implement its ideas on relationships between men and women. As an insider who seemed to be elaborating on well-established Mormon cultural norms, she hoped the Church would support her program, but to no avail. Neuffer explores this tension and Andelin's frustrations. Broader historical context would have strengthened this book, but it is a shorter read and shows the continued influence of Andelin's ideas on cultural norms. *Your Sister in the Gospel: The Life of Jane Manning James, A Nineteenth-Century Black Mormon* (Quincy D. Newell, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) provides a portrait of this early African American member and her struggles for recognition and inclusion

within the Church. Newell constructed this biography from limited sources, and her careful work is a worthy example of producing the history of challenging subjects.

Other historians have used a social history approach to show how women have negotiated their roles in the institution but also how they have created their own spaces to find meaning for themselves. *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017) delves into the private, seemingly ordinary lives of Mormon women in the nineteenth century leading up to the surprisingly determined push for the right to vote in 1870. Ulrich's power with words and her gift for mining gold from countless fragmented records of women's lives make this a pleasurable read, and her footnotes are a great resource that point to many other scholars and their work for further study. *Sister Saints: Mormon Women Since the End of Polygamy* (Colleen McDannell, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) focuses mainly on the twentieth century, placing Mormon women within the larger context of American history, and considers the diverse experiences of these women within the faith. McDannell summarizes many other works but includes new insights and sources that others have not yet used to consider the daily religious practices of Mormon women. For a different angle, *The Power of Godliness* (Jonathan A. Stapley, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) explores some of the gender dynamics in Mormon liturgy and cosmology. Stapley includes materials on the history of female ritual healing and giving of blessings. Women are not the main focus of the work but form an important part of the narrative on liturgy.¹

1. Important additional reads on female ritual healing are two co-written articles: Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "The Forms and the Power: The Development of Mormon Ritual Healing to 1847," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 42–87; and Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 1–85.

Contemporary Mormon women, of course, face a different set of tensions than their historical sisters, and recent scholarship grapples with these, moving the field in a direction that showcases feminism and the perspectives of women and others at the margins. *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Kate Holbrook and Matthew Bowman, eds., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016) brings together works by historians and social scientists along with contemporary personal perspectives. This volume is a helpful state-of-the-field collection, considering women, power, and agency. *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings* (Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, and Hannah Wheelwright, eds., New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), a much-anticipated volume on the contemporary Mormon feminist movement, makes important sources available to generations to come, showing the continued work of women for institutional recognition, including the work of those who openly challenge the power structure itself. Looking more at the margins of institutional and narrative power, *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Post-colonial Zion* (Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, eds., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018) is a critical contribution. The editors of this volume argue that scholars and the Church itself need to look at the so-called periphery of institutionalized communities and how people have claimed power in these spaces and addressed issues of colonialism in the Church. Their volume also argues that the answers for how to build a Zion community are found in the global Church. Chapters include pieces by Indigenous authors, some looking at contemporary issues and others rooting these issues in their history of imperialism and colonialism. This volume is an essential read for anyone working in Mormon studies today.

Women's formal scope and authority has often been limited within Mormon institutions, but all of these scholarly works from the past few years reveal women, both historical and contemporary, creatively navigating the mazes of power structures to exercise their agency and build their visions for their lives and for the Church. While the paradigm

hasn't fully shifted, scholars who prioritize women's history as part of the main thread of history rather than a specialized subfield, and who apply an intersectional lens to the overlapping power structures of race, gender, class, and geography, offer new and critical modes of understanding our Mormon past, present, and future.

CHARLOTTE HANSEN TERRY {charlottehansenterry@gmail.com} is a PhD student at the University of California, Davis. She focuses on gender, race, religion, and imperialism in the American West and Pacific.



Fourteen Respite

Ashley Mae Hoiland. *One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly: The Art of Seeking God*. Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2017. 212 pp. Paperback: \$12.95. ISBN: 978-0842529921.

Reviewed by Meg Conley

One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly is the kind of work that becomes more radical with time. When I first read it years ago, I appreciated it. I liked its looseness and its light. I felt a kinship with the woman who wrote and the children she mothered and the world they tramped through with wet shoes and too few snacks. I felt like I was that woman and the children were my children and the cold feet and hungry stomachs were mine to warm and mine to feed.

When I returned to *One Hundred Birds*, I expected to gather up enough sustaining sisterhood to get through another wondrous, hard year of long walks trailed by little feet. Instead, by the time I was done reading (in one sitting while the littlest feet napped), my hands were stuffed full of the filaments of faith.

Written by Ashley Mae Hoiland, writer, artist, and founder of the creative writing website *Mine to Tell*, *One Hundred Birds* is fourteen, well, fourteen what? Not chapters, they're more and less than chapters. Better to call them respites, really. *One Hundred Birds* is fourteen respites of sketches, poems, questions, and lists. The lists! Lists of prayers and people and moments and wonderings and wanderings. They are the kind of lists I imagine dotting the corkboards of Creation.

One Hundred Birds isn't a story, not really. It is a book full of the moments that make people want to tell stories. As the reader moves from sketch to prayer to anecdote on a Swedish wayside, you get the sense that Hoiland is a woman more interested in the fullness of a moment than the fulfillment of a narrative arc. It is this freedom from the constraint of conclusion that gives *One Hundred Birds* its wings. (Conclusion has little place in an ever-progressing eternity anyway.)

One Hundred Birds is about the art of seeking God. It's a bold framing in a faith tradition increasingly reliant on formal formulas for spiritual enlightenment. Where do you seek God outside of the handbook?

God is found in community building, and Hoiland knows this. She gently tells us about her efforts. About a homemade banner that said "Be Brave" strewn across a busy path, or a late-night installation of wildflower seed packets on a neighborhood fence. Another time she leads a project that puts local poetry on billboards that are usually plastered with plastic surgery ads. Her outreach reaches back. The banner is kept up and embellished by grateful, tired college students. The seeds are planted and wildflowers bloom. A man with little to hold in his hands looks up and sees his poetry against the sky.

God is found in isolation, and Hoiland knows this. She gently invites us into her quietude. By her side, we partake of the often anchoritic experience of being a mother anywhere and a woman in Mormonism. It is a generous offering. One of the most profound moments in the book happens as she contemplates her children playing on the floor:

“Play for my children consists of hours submerged in countless possibilities. Could we not do the same with our own spiritual lives?”

It’s not all play. There is boredom and pain for any woman in a cell. But as Saint Julian has shown us, Christ can be found there too. Sometimes, right next to the crayons.

Sometimes God isn’t found at all. Hoiland knows this. But there is a grace given in the seeking. She knows this too.

There are no answers in *One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly*. There is no grandstanding over doctrinal divides or exhibition via erudite ruminations. Because of this, it’s been called—by men, mostly—simple and sweet. A wisp of a book by a whirl of a girl. A truly good effort. It can be difficult to hear the faint praise over the heavy pats on Hoiland’s head. I suppose after decades of finding safe crossing with cross-references, Hoiland’s pietism amid playdough might feel a bit messy.

While there is no doubt of Hoiland’s own learnedness—her literacy is embedded in every expressive line—this book is a meditation on seeking God outside of the stacks, outside the quotations of men. *One Hundred Birds* teaches us to look around where we stand, in the kitchen, in the office, on your front step, waiting outside our children’s school and ask, “Is God here?”

It’s the question that founded Mormonism asked in a way that will help revitalize Mormonism. The right questions cast light. “Is God here?” This quest as question illuminates and reveals a Mormonism that is more than follow and footnote. With *One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly*, Hoiland brushes the chalk off her hands, reaches out, and offers us Mormonism as a language of seeking, a halting tongue making holy sounds.

MEG CONLEY {meginprogress@gmail.com} is an Oakland-based writer and speaker. Wife to Riley Bingham. Mother of three daughters, Margaret Zuzu, Viola Honey, and Brontë Fig.





Michelle Franzoni Thorley
Family History and Temple Work
20x24

SYMBOLS ON CANVAS

Lita Little Giddins

Women. A subject that stirs my soul as I seek to navigate this dance of life. I have recently become even more aware of my own need for a community of women to help me stay grounded.

Women of color. A targeted population of which I am a part and have natural and undeniable feelings about. I regularly offer prayers about how I can be more around, involved with, and ready to learn from this spirit-provoking group.

The arts. The creative expressions of the mind and soul are lifelong tools that have been fundamental to my sense of rootedness. In my personal life and in my career as a licensed therapist, the arts are incorporated in everything I do.

I hold deep thoughts and feelings in these three areas and am always eager to talk about them. So when I was invited to write about *Family History and Temple Work* by Michelle Franzoni Thorley, an artistically gifted woman of color, I viewed it as a fortuitous heaven-sent opportunity and gratefully accepted.

It is fitting that this topic coincides with the one hundredth anniversary since the Nineteenth Amendment was passed by Congress, which gave American women the right to vote. Those committed to the movement daringly fought for equal power and for the privilege and right to have their voices heard. They fought to be seen and have their contributions to society welcomed until it was finally granted. Well, to some, but not to all. For black and various hues of brown-skinned women like Michelle's female family members and mine, this was not the case. And sadly, the fight continues. The present-day need

to readdress the movement of women claiming power indicates it is still a timely and possibly timeless issue.

Meeting Michelle

I encountered Michelle's passionate spirit first before meeting her face-to-face. Michelle presented a talk entitled "Diversity in LDS Art" at the festival for the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts in New York City this past June. Michelle is a beautiful Mexican American woman, and I was moved by her candor as she shared her unique experiences of oppression that resonated with my own. I was also impressed as she shared her journey to become a self-taught artist to add to the complex and multidimensional community of LDS art in a style that is conscientious and intentional. Michelle stood and spoke with a firm resolve of her commitment to claim her position as a diverse female artist while extending a hand to other women of color to join her. The traditional limitations on women's participation in public spaces have created an underrepresentation of women, particularly women of color, in positions of power. Women have been expected to retract opinions, rethink ideas, and relinquish identity due to the unrelenting pressure to accept their marginalized position. However, Michelle stood resolute behind the podium and in her conviction to not be consigned to such a reduced and unsolicited place. As she stood unapologetically in that space, I felt an essence about her that was "flora_familiar" to me (her Instagram name). I felt a long-lost sister in the gospel had been found!

After the presentation, I made it a point to meet this extraordinary sister. As we spoke, Michelle's power as a woman, a woman of color, and an artist became very clear. It was not so much about the words she spoke, which held me captive as we held hands to talk with one another. It was more about what was felt as I gazed upon her lovely face. Hand in hand and spirit to spirit I witnessed vision, purpose, and fire branded

in her determined dark brown eyes and erupting like volcanic hopes from within her heart.

Symbols of Time

How do women claim power comparable to what emanated so generously from Michelle? For marginalized populations, finding ways to accomplish that quest has been difficult. But it is important to understand and remember that power is an inherent and internal work. Claiming power is about being aware of, acknowledging, accepting, nurturing, perceiving, and magnifying that ever-present force inside oneself. In Michelle's *Family History and Temple Work* painting I see many symbols that collectively capture the essence of power I felt upon our meeting.

The Calla Lily

Michelle's use of the calla lily stood out to me personally because my own bridal bouquet was made from calla lilies. *Family History and Temple Work* prompted me to research the flower and I was amazed to discover that it is native to Africa! Although the history and significance of the calla lily was unknown to me on my wedding day, today my awareness of the flower's meaning gives me additional insight into Michelle's work. Like Africa and its people, the calla lily is often misjudged and underestimated. Like women, the calla lily is seen as vulnerable or weak. In reality, Africa, women, and the calla lily have a longstanding history of survival, strength, fortitude, and resiliency that is worth noting. The calla lily possesses the chemical calcium oxalate, which protects it from elements that could prove harmful when neglected or overlooked. With that protection it is able to survive and increase in strength over time to make its measurable contributions to the earth, much like Africa and its people, and in the same way women have done from antiquity.

There is a reassurance I feel from *Family History and Temple Work* as calla lilies blossom near a gravesite and close to the female ancestors. The principles of feminine power echo with fluidity back and forth through the generations of time to the women in the foreground. They seem determined to set all hearts at rest that, as Katharine Hepburn calls out in the movie *Stage Door*, “The calla lilies are in bloom again!” *Family History and Temple Work* reminds us that women of power will also bloom again, given time.

The Butterfly

I carry a butterfly on my keychain and have butterfly decor around my home. It is significant to me because it is a symbol of change and hope in my life during seasons of struggle and stalled transitions. During those times, not only have I felt my power waning, but my patience as well. The presence of the butterfly in *Family History and Temple Work* is a merciful reminder that we, as women, like movement in a dance, are constantly shifting through this transitioning process of time in the amazing plan of transformation.

The positioning of the butterflies near and around the three groups of women is intriguing. They give me the sense that they are representing the passage of time from the past to the present and into the future. If the butterflies are monarchs then they could also represent the multigenerational migration of a people or, more specifically, the mass movement of purposeful women. Author Deborah Chaskin affirmed, “Just like the butterfly, I too will awaken in my own time.” Instead of seeing this as the women in the painting being currently devoid of power, I see the butterflies as indicating that power is already embodied, and that we can assuredly anticipate the time when the reclaiming of that power will become more fully manifested in the lives of each of us.

So, this is the question: how will the perception of women claiming power become more fully manifested? As varied and vast as the answers

to this question may be, I believe one of the answers stands hand in hand, face-to-face, and deep within the soul, where power resides.

Symbols of Power

Hand-Holding

Michelle chose to visually link the three women in the center of the artwork together by hand-holding. What an incredible symbol of power this is! It speaks to the importance of understanding that women cannot reclaim power in isolation. We need the support of each other in order to succeed.

Something happens through the sense of touch. There is a transference of energy or spirit that occurs that can positively affect emotions and communication. Where women are involved this can, in turn, expand our sense of self and our communities. It can promote broader inclusivity and create a feeling of well-being that is desperately needed throughout the world.

The Temple

Although the temple is positioned in the background of the lush garden of ancestresses, its foundational role in the painting moves it to the front and center. The presence of the temple in *Family History and Temple Work* carries a strong personal message for me. For the past fourteen years, I have prioritized regularly going to the house of the Lord. I initially went out of my desire to be obedient to follow the counsel of the prophet. Now I attend out of necessity for my well-being.

I often find myself in periods of time when I feel as if I am in a space of ambiguity and lacking in personal power, especially when it comes to family matters. During those times I feel as if I'm in a holding pattern, caught between my desire to move forward in what I want to do and allowing myself to submit to the will of Omnipotence so I can be lovingly parented. So, I attend the temple as a way to reclaim my power. At times burdens are heavy and promises appear distant. At times, as an

LDS person of color, limited options are put before me that contradict more natural preferences from a cultural or ethnic standpoint. Consequently, I am left feeling compromised. But with the temple, I am able to enter into a temporal and spiritual space where my heart can receive reconciliation as I honor the power of God and self.

This is where I need to speak specifically about the temple topic as it relates to the remarkable African American Latter-day Saint pioneer Jane Manning James. As an artist I have had several opportunities to portray this exemplary heroine and to write about her as well. With each opportunity came an increased understanding and appreciation for the way this woman honored the sacred power of God and self.

Sister Jane had a unique understanding of who she was and that her life was equally purposeful and equally meaningful to our heavenly parents, as are the lives of all of their children. Her life was a testament to this truth. Sister Jane remained deeply rooted in honoring the power of God and honoring her own power as a daughter of God. For these reasons, Jane was persistent in her quest to receive the full blessings of the temple, but her petitions to Church leaders were continually denied because of her race.

Living conditions were harsh and difficult for early pioneers of the Church. Being a woman, black, and a Latter-day Saint increased the complexities of Jane's struggle. I empathize with her as she yearned to enter into the house of the Lord so that she, too, could have the opportunity to seek spiritual strengthening, to relieve a portion of her burdens, and to bless her family. I ache for Sister Jane having to live during a time in which she was unable to act for herself in her efforts to achieve her spiritual quest. I ache for her because she was unable to enter into the temple so she could, like the plea in the African American song "Oh Freedom!", "go home to [her] Lord and be free" for a while.

I think about Jane Manning James when I go to the house of the Lord. I think about family members who were enslaved, those whose civil rights were refused, and those whose blessings were denied. I go to

the temple because I need to and I can. I also go to the temple because they needed to but could not. I am grateful for their supportive and ministering spirits sustaining me in my weekly efforts to reclaim my power as the women in Michelle's painting appear to be sustaining each other in theirs.

Symbols of Perception

When I look at *Family History and Temple Work*, I see another rich and vivid image in my mind's eye. This is what I see: to my right I hold the hand of an ancestral woman linked with other transgenerational women. These are women who were deprived of equality, liberty, and so much more. With those women I include my sister in the gospel Jane Manning James and other black female Latter-day Saint pioneers. From places beyond the past they firmly hold my hand in support and encouragement as I stand in my present.

To my left I see my three daughters: Camlyn, Grayson, and Ayan. Their hands are linked and hold firmly to each other and to me with such trust and foresight that they will one day live in a time where their questions are answered and their quests are bountifully attained. I see myself standing in the space of in-between, but now I perceive myself as a woman consciously reclaiming power from those who have come before and those who follow. It is a position of honor.

With this new perception, I return to the eye-gazing, heart-connecting moment when I met Michelle as we also stood hand in hand. I did not realize when I stood face-to-face with my brown-skinned sister, as I held her hand in mine, the significance that moment would have in my life. Now I do.

On my wedding day I did not understand or appreciate what was being symbolically communicated as I held the bouquet of calla lilies in my hands. Now I do.

Fourteen years ago, I did not understand what my weekly pilgrimage to the temple would do for my heart and soul. Now I do.

All of these were moments in time when I reclaimed power. Power is claimed by how it is perceived by the individual. The power I see in myself and that I felt from Michelle lies inherently in each of our hands as we support each other as women along the way on our individual journeys. I saw the truthfulness of this statement when I looked into Michelle's eyes that memorable day in June. That truth was further confirmed as we talked face-to-face and spirit-to-spirit, with her hand held in mine, as the power I perceive in myself and that I felt from Michelle was reciprocated.

So, how will women claiming power become more fully manifested? From brush to canvas, and from my personal encounter with her essence so familiar, the symbols from Michelle's artwork witness this truth: the ability to reclaim power lies in each of *our* hands from eternity to all time.

It always has been and always will be.

Symbolic Manifesto

Positioned in order and matter is a sphere that is fragmented

In phases where patterns of transitions are designed in

Time

There, breathing is shallow from indecisions and unknowing

*How does veil-ness line up to precept on precept in the space of
in-between*

To arrive at the here and there a little?

Temporal to spiritual?

Where is there room to be secured

In this human-measured condition of

Time?

*Where feelings of standing in the holy place of uncertainty, the
unanswered, are unearthed?*

In this perceived vacuum she enters into a house that is Named

Ascending to the not-of this sphere of

Time

*There, breathing deepens and decisions in knowing gather from the
Lineage of Light.*

*In the solace of the House of No Other Name her soul feels anointed,
Consecrated in understanding, acknowledgment and acceptance
Transcending the not-of this into the peace and rest of that in
Time*

*Restored are promises irrevocable
Descending from an endless heavenly pillar to
Time*

*Spiritual to temporal
Redeemed are origins of spirits unfathomable,
Begotten nations, kindreds, organized dominions,
Sceptered heirs and heiresses*

*In between Alpha and Omega existence, inherited heritages are
prepared*

*At the places of entering, the doors are opened
Above them, atoningly inscribed, the hand in hand symbol affirms
truths as they really are*

*Soul to Soul
Godliness with Goddess-ness
Power from Power.*

*From the Bearers of All Time to the Bearers of All Living
"Reclaim."*

LITA LITTLE GIDDINS {lita.kevin@comcast.net} is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who incorporates expressive arts and creative therapies. Her undergraduate degree is in sociocultural anthropology, and she also received an AA in fine arts. Lita uses the full scope of her education in her efforts to influence people, organizations, and cultures. Her broad experience in the arts has afforded her the opportunity to present, teach, coach, train, and travel to many parts of the world where she works closely with diverse populations.

ARTISTS

MICHELLE FRANZONI THORLEY {florafamiliar@gmail.com} creates art that focuses on the ancestral power to heal. She is a self-taught artist who has claimed power through embracing her Mexican-American heritage and her experiences as an LDS woman artist. Her work has been displayed at the Writ and Vision gallery, LDS Church History Museum, and the Springville Museum of Art. She spoke at the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts in New York City in June 2019 about diversity in LDS art. She is passionate about plants, family history, and the stories of women. Her work and words can be found on Instagram at @flora_familiar. She lives in Utah with her spouse and three young children.

LINDA HOFFMAN KIMBALL {lhkimball@pobox.com} earned her BA from Wellesley College and her MFA from Boston University. She works in a variety of media from printmaking to collage and from photography to fiber arts. She is a writer and a founding member of Mormon Women for Ethical Government. Raised near Chicago and a convert to the Church during her college years, she now lives in rural Utah where she is one of the many “ministers” in the Woodland Ward.

HEIDI SOMSEN {www.heidimollersomsen.com} was born in Saskatchewan, and raised on the coast of British Columbia. She received a BFA in ceramics from Brigham Young University (1995) and an MFA in studio art from the University of Utah (2011). She is a two time Utah Artist grant recipient and has been included in three publications: *500 Figures in Clay, Volume 2*; *Utah Art Utah Artists: 150 Year Survey*; and *Utah Painting and Sculpture*. Currently, Heidi teaches at the University of Utah and the Visual Art Institute.

“From a young age I have always had a playful interaction with material, creating art out of whatever I could find: drift wood, rocks, moss, and a nice coating of Elmer’s glue as glaze. My school report cards often stated that I daydreamed too much—I’m afraid this is still the case.”



Michelle Franzoni Thorley
Family History and Temple Work (detail, two figures)
oil on canvas

THE GEBIRAH AND FEMALE POWER¹

Amber Richardson

My girlhood fascination with princesses and queens has curbed only slightly, if at all, in my young adult years. I first encountered them in the fairy tale, as most of us do, but they have followed me into this stage of my life, and I see them everywhere now: in history, in the scriptures, and occasionally even in myself.

This gift, the gift of the omnipresent queen, is one that has been incredibly needed in my present life and work. I host a podcast called *On Sovereign Wings*, which broadcasts the stories of women who are seeking healing after sexual assault. I'm also writing a book entitled *Woman, Crowned*, which depicts she-sovereigns in scripture and draws connections between them and the divine woman we sometimes call the Queen of Heaven, or our Heavenly Mother.

The story I'd like to tell you this evening—or perhaps retell—is one that sits right at the crossroads of these two causes. As a survivor of sexual assault myself, the woman that I'd like to tell you about has become a central mentor to me. But I believe that her rise from victim to queen-mother has application far beyond those of us who have experienced sexual assault firsthand.

In many ways abuse of this kind is a bodily manifestation of something that women have encountered the world over. This passage from the biblical Song of Solomon illustrates what I mean in visceral symbolism. According to the text, in this passage it is a woman speaking. She says, “The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote

1. This talk was originally given at a HerStory devotional hosted by WOMB in American Fork, Utah on May 11, 2019.

me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.”²

They smote me, they wounded me, they took away my veil from me. If we read the veil as a symbol of power, specifically as a symbol of female power,³ the emotional weight of this verse is likely familiar and evident. At key points throughout my life I have felt keenly disempowered as a woman. I imagine it’s not too much of a stretch to guess that many women in this room have felt the same. If you have, come on this journey with me. If you haven’t, would you take a moment and imagine what that might feel like, to be disempowered?

Within the Song of Solomon, the veil also hearkens to the archetype of the bride. The Song of Solomon prominently features an allegorical wedding feast and the love and loss that builds and winds up to that wedding. The woman speaking in verse seven is the bride-to-be. And it is in her search for her bridegroom and king that she is beaten and stripped of her uniquely feminine vestments.

The authorship of the Song of Solomon is highly disputed in academic circles, although it is traditionally associated with Solomon himself in some capacity. Perhaps that tradition stems from verses like this one, which seems to identify Solomon as the king and bridegroom in question: “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.”⁴

Did you catch who crowned King Solomon according to that verse? His mother. Interesting, isn’t it? Solomon’s mother is referenced numerous times throughout the wisdom texts. She appears in the introduction to the book of Proverbs, which reads, “My son, hear the instruction of

2. Song of Solomon 5:7.

3. 1 Corinthians 11:10.

4. Song of Solomon 3:11.

thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”⁵ Here she is again in an image too seldom talked about in 1 Kings: “And the King rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the King’s mother; and she sat on his right hand.”⁶

In Hebrew, there’s a specific word that denotes Solomon’s mother’s position at the court, *Gebirah*; it means queen mother. The *Gebirah* was the most influential woman in ancient Israel, not only at court but within the kingdom as a whole. If we flip to another chapter of scripture, we’ll see a pivotal indication that the *Gebirah* wasn’t only respected by her son, but that her words were revered by all the people in the kingdom. Let’s take a look at Proverbs 31:1: “The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.” Have you noticed that verse before? Is its significance hitting you the way it hit me? This verse tells us that an ancient *Gebirah*, an ancient queen mother, a *woman*, was the author of a chapter of scripture. Incidentally (or not incidentally at all, I should say), this particular chapter poses the infamous question, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”⁷ The Hebrew word for virtue, *chayil*, is the same word used to describe men of valor who served in war. And so you could retranslate that question to read, “Who can find a powerful woman? for her price is far above rubies.” It makes sense to me that a *Gebirah*, especially a righteous one, would have many lessons to teach her son, and all of us, about female power.

But why all of this? What is the relevance of the *Gebirah* to sexual assault, or to disempowerment more generally? Well, Solomon’s mother was Bathsheba. And when you think about Bathsheba, what comes to mind first? Perhaps the immediate association is adultery, or you

5. Proverbs 1:8.

6. 1 Kings 2:19.

7. Proverbs 31:10.

remember her as David's temptation, or maybe you're like me and a surge of anger pulses through your veins when you think of her. Whatever came to your mind first, I would imagine that it was not this image of the sovereign, wise, and loving Gebirah. Boiled down, this conundrum mirrors exactly the prison that women find themselves in, within their own hearts. We see ourselves as bad, or shameful, or as objects, or as victims first and foremost, and not as the queens we truly are and are becoming.

There are as many interpretations of Bathsheba's story as there are hairs on my head. But I believe one interpretation in particular offers women a vital path forward toward the reclamation of self and female power. This, to me, seems like the necessary oxygen that so many of our sisters are struggling for. We can tell this story without vilifying David. We can tell this story without growing hatred in our hearts, just as we can tell our stories without becoming hardened or embittered. This is the path we must take if we are to heal and reclaim our whole and sovereign selves. Telling these stories does mean wading into pain. But I promise there is a way out of that pain.

When David was King, long ago in ancient Israel, he sent his thirty-seven strong men away to battle, but he stayed home in his palace. One night while he was out on *his* roof, he saw a woman bathing. He asked one of his guards who this woman was. "Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah," came the reply. Uriah was one of David's thirty-seven strong men. He knew that name. And he knew that Uriah was away, fighting. He also knew that this woman, Bathsheba, wasn't merely taking a hygienic bath. She was bathing in a *mikvah*, the pool of water where women would immerse themselves after their periods to demarcate their transition from ritually unclean to clean again. In one motion, David could change the course of this woman's life forever. And that is what he did. He sent his soldiers to take Bathsheba and bring her to his palace.

We have no record of her feelings or her words upon being received at the palace, but we do know that the law of Moses did not protect

married women from sexually predatory behavior. Even if it did, Bathsheba was a commoner and she had no political rights to refuse a king. Saying no could cost her her life.

Do we need the Bible to spell out how she felt? Could language do justice to those depths of sorrow even if it were attempted? I imagine that many of you sitting here don't need a record of her words to know how she felt.

Bathsheba conceived during that night with the king—the night she never asked for, or wanted, or seduced into being. What could she do now? Everyone in her community would know that this baby had been conceived outside wedlock because everyone in her community knew that her husband was fighting in the war. So she wrote a letter to David, pleading for his help. The punishment for adultery, and perceived adultery, was stoning.

What would you have done in her shoes?

When David received the letter, he sent out another one asking for Uriah to return home. This Uriah did, but he refused to sleep in his own bed because he was a man of honor. And so, not seeing another option, David sent Uriah back into battle, this time to the front line.

When news of Uriah's death reached Jerusalem, Nathan the prophet came to visit David. He brought with him a customized parable designed to catch David in his guilt. In the parable, Nathan compared David to a wealthy merchant with many sheep, and he compared Uriah to a poor and lowly shepherd who only possessed one little ewe lamb, a little ewe lamb he loved very much. Within the parable, the wealthy merchant, David, stole the little ewe lamb from the poor shepherd and slaughtered it. If David is likened to the merchant in the parable, and Uriah to the poor shepherd, how is Bathsheba represented? Bathsheba is symbolized by the little female lamb, an almost universal symbol of innocence. I'll also mention that, to my knowledge, Bathsheba is the only person compared to a lamb in scripture other than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The significance of this shared symbolism doesn't escape me.

This is typically where Bathsheba's story ends. We get caught up in moralizing David's gaze and decisions, and we get lost in the murky waters of his condemnation and repentance. All these are worthy lessons, although I would suggest that we can teach them in better ways that will release shame and ennoble our boys to free themselves from our dangerous culture that teaches them to objectify girls and women.

The real loss here is the abandonment of Bathsheba's narrative. Because while David fell, Bathsheba rose. She gave birth to four more sons, and when her first, Solomon, was of age David was on his death-bed. As David lay dying, his kingdom was in tumult. His oldest living son, Adonijah, was gathering followers and attempting to take the throne from the heir presumptive, Solomon. Nathan, knowing that Solomon was God's anointed, enlisted Bathsheba's help.

Bathsheba went to David and reminded him that he had once promised her that Solomon would rule as king. The scriptures say she made "obedience" to him and that in response he said, "As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, . . . Solomon thy son shall reign after me."⁸

This exchange happened many years after the initial suffering David had inflicted on Bathsheba. He sexually assaulted her, yes, but he also murdered her husband and brought her into his harem as one of his wives. In modern times, many women maintain relationships with their perpetrators, if only because of the familiar ties that first connected them. It is less common for a victim to be married to her perpetrator following the assault. Marrying Bathsheba was likely an act of mercy and restitution on David's part, since she would have been stoned otherwise, but that marriage would not have lessened the load of mental trauma she carried.

I cannot even imagine what that must have been like for Bathsheba. Being married to David must have meant that she was constantly,

8. 1 Kings 1:29–30.

cyclically re-traumatized and brought face-to-face over and over again with what could have so easily translated into a state of permanent, crippling victimhood.

And that's what makes the deathbed scene so amazing. Bathsheba had transformed. She must have to become the figure of influence this story shows her to be. Nathan, the prophet, depended on her during a crucial and dangerous time to sway the king. And David trusted her good judgment too. She could not have stepped into that exchange without having arrived at some sense of her own power, and some sense of forgiveness.

The ultimate product of Bathsheba's transformation was, as we discussed earlier, her being appointed Gebirah. Within the Song of Solomon, we see Solomon representing the bridegroom and the king. This king dies and is reborn, ultimately returning to his bride. This is familiar symbolism for Christians, especially for those who are familiar with the visionary bridegroom metaphor as it plays out in John the Beloved's revelations. The bridegroom, of course, represents Christ. The bride is traditionally associated with the Church, but it is always personified as female. So, for the sake of our conversation today, let's imagine the bride as a representation of each of us, as each woman who has been stripped of her uniquely feminine vestments and is searching for her power and her king.

And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee.⁹

9. Micah 4:8–10.

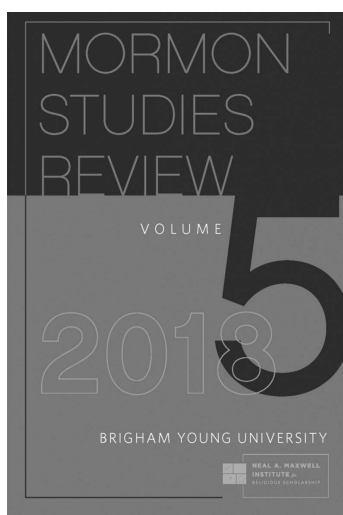
The bride, referred to in those jubilant verses as the tower of the flock and the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, will be delivered. She will be brought forth out of Babylon, and the Lord shall redeem her. These are the exact themes you'll find preserved in the Song of Solomon.

So, I'd like to close with a question. If Solomon represents Christ, the bridegroom, who then does his mother, Bathsheba, represent?

Bathsheba typifies the great, loving, and wise Gebirah, doesn't she? The queen mother who sits at the right hand of her son, the bridegroom and king, the woman we sometimes call our Heavenly Mother or the Queen of Heaven. And if she could speak for a moment, break the silence there on her holy seat, I think she would offer us the promise of the Gebirah who speaks in Proverbs 31: "Who can find a powerful woman?" she repeats your question back to you. "Strength and honor are her clothing, and she *shall* rejoice in time to come."

AMBER RICHARDSON {richardson.amb@gmail.com} is a storyteller with credits in many mediums. She has produced a YouTube series, *Splitting the Sky*, and a podcast, *On Sovereign Wings*. She's performed in festivals and plays such as *Mother Wove the Morning* by Carol Lynn Pearson. The common thread running through her creative work is a desire to expand the female experience within a spiritual context. You can connect with her on Instagram @richardson.amb

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS



MORMON STUDIES REVIEW

Co-Edited by Quincy D. Newell and Benjamin E. Park

Since 1989, the *Mormon Studies Review* published review essays to help serious readers make informed choices and judgments about books and other publications on topics related to the Latter-day Saint religious tradition. These publications, originally produced by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), included substantial freestanding essays that made further contributions to the field of Mormon studies. The journal was originally called *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* beginning in 1989, then *FARMS Review of Books* in 1996, followed by *The FARMS Review* in 2003. In 2011 the journal was renamed *Mormon Studies Review*.

www.press.uillinois.edu • (217) 244-0626 • journals@uillinois.edu

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

American MUSIC

Edited by Gayle Sherwood Magee

American Music is the first journal devoted exclusively to American music and the wide-ranging scope implied by its title. Articles cover a rich array of composers, performers, publishers, institutions, performing traditions, and events.

Subscriptions to *American Music* start at \$25.00 for students, \$47.00 for individuals. Institutional subscriptions start at \$137.00.

For more information, please visit
<http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/am.html>

www.press.uillinois.edu • (217) 244-0626 • journals@uillinois.edu