White Roses on the Floor of Heaven

Mormon Women's Popular Theology, 1880–1920

Susanna Morrill

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Series Editors' Foreword

This volume marks the tenth volume in its series: Religion in History, Society and Culture. This series is designed to bring exciting new work by young scholars on religion to a wider audience. We have two goals in mind.

First, we wish to publish work that extends and illuminates our theoretical understanding of religion as a dimension of human culture and society. Understanding religion has never been a more pressing need. Longstanding academic habits of either compartmentalizing, or altogether ignoring, religion are breaking down. With the entry of religion into the academy, however, must come a fully realized conversation about what religion is and how it interacts with history, society and culture. Our goal is to publish books that self-reflectively utilize and develop contextually sensitive categories and methods of analysis that advance our knowledge of religion generally, of a particular religious traditions and/or of a particular moment in the history of religions in a particular part of the world.

Second, this series is self-consciously interdisciplinary. The academic study of religion is conducted by historians, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, art historians, ethno-musicologists, psychologists, and others. We hope to bring before the interested reader an array of disciplinary lenses through which to view religion. Believing that the instability of the category itself should be a stimulus for further investigation, religion is broadly understood to encompass a wide range of religiously oriented phenomena that include myths, rituals, ways of thought, communities, political and social movements, legal traditions and systems, performances and texts, artistic productions, gendered roles, identity formation, etc.

Susanna Morrill offers here a fine and sensitive reading of the little known, and often simply caricatured, history of the religious lives of Mormon women at the turn of the twentieth century. She reads the extensive use of flower imagery in poetry and other writing by these women as a

species of lay theologizing—a way that LDS women elaborated and celebrated the latent female symbolism within a still young and incomplete religious system. While flower symbolism was widespread in American Victorian popular culture, Morrill argues persuasively that LDS women' s use of flower imagery accomplished real theological work in bringing together the mythical spaces and personalities of Eden and heaven with the everyday experiences of nature of the early pioneers in the desert. In a distinctively Mormon religious literalism, flowers became powerful but often ambiguous images of women's experiences of suffering and redemption in the women's effort to explore Mormon theodicy.

Morrill draws together disciplinary resources from literary studies, social history, and the sociology and anthropology of religion to deepen and complicate our understanding of Mormon history in a key transitional period. She also adds to our knowledge of women's religion and of "nature" religion in nineteenth century U.S., more generally. She challenges those theorists who would understand this often sentimental literature as simply a vehicle for the affirmation of traditional gender roles. She asks them rather to hear in this literature the voices of LDS women "doing theology"—thinking through and communicating with one another, and with the leaders of the church, about the religious meaning of their lives and hopes at a time of change, hardship, and persecution.

Frank Reynolds & Winnifred Sullivan

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Introduction

In the summer of 1996, I made my way West from Chicago to Salt Lake City in order to examine the changing roles of women within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (more commonly called the LDS or Mormon Church) at the turn of the twentieth century. The project would continue the lively scholarly conversations about LDS women's relationship to the priesthood, the lay spiritual authority exercised by men in the church. I had also hoped to delve deeper into the significance for women of the Mormon female deity, the Mother in Heaven. Perhaps most importantly, I planned to explore how LDS women had lost some of their institutional independence and authority within the church during this era. Though these were all subjects that had been studied for twenty years or more,[1] they had an air of urgency and importance about them partly because only a few years before, in 1993, a number of LDS scholars had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church for working on these precise questions.[2] Women's place in the Mormon Church was a still live and hotly contested topic even for me, a non-Mormon who was more interested in tracking and understanding the process of how women were excluded from institutional structures, rather than making arguments for or against it.

Through my research, I was planning to explore the apparent paradox of early LDS women: authoritative and strong within a self-consciously patriarchal religion. Starting in the 1840s, these women had developed a distinct and independent place for themselves in the Mormon frontier communities of the Southwest, but they were also depicted within the mainstream American press as pawns and victims of nineteenth-century polygamy. I was hoping this seeming disjunction would help me to discover how and why women in new, conservative American religious groups (for instance, Pentacostalism, Seventh-day Adventism) were often allowed

access to limited institutional authority in the early phases of these movements, but gradually deprived of this authority as these groups developed.

Once in Utah, however, I was quickly sidetracked from my original purpose. Women writers revealed little concern about their narrowing institutional authority. Instead, the sources began to reveal a community of women who were absorbed in different, often more immediate concerns—concerns that women expressed through descriptions of the natural world. The periodicals, monographs, diaries, journals, autobiographies, and oral histories written by and about LDS women were filled with the details of everyday lives and their struggles to stay physically and emotionally healthy in the taxing environment of early Utah. In these writings, LDS women were continuously engaged with the natural elements and landscapes, whether this was a heavenly landscape, a landscape of imagination or memory, or the landscape in which the writers actually lived. Now residing in the stunning natural beauty of the same mountain-surrounded valley, I could easily relate to their sense of wonder. And so the project took an immediate detour as I tried to allow LDS women to tell their own stories.

As I carefully read the personal, periodical, and monographic literature produced by LDS women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I began to notice a definite pattern to these stories. On the one hand, there were the mundane and sometimes harrowing tales of the battle for day-to-day existence in the desert Southwest. These accounts were simply told and spoke volumes about the perseverance and practical creativity of men and women living in a harsh environment and intent on an eternal goal. LDS women described, often in great detail, their daily rounds of cooking, cleaning, and childcare. For example, as the president of her local Arizona Relief Society (the women's organization of the church), Olive Woolley Kimball, recorded the rhythm of activities associated with her home and Society duties. According to her journal, the emergency situations of sickness and death were common occurrences, and Kimball often had to fit the practicalities of daily life around these more urgent realities. In one 1901 entry, for instance, Kimball notes:

> Sister Woods little girl died last night so Sister Phillips, Cynthia Layton, Amy Fuller and myself went to Sister Phillips' and made her burial clothes we got through about two oclock and then I came home and bathed the children and got them ready to go to her funeral which was at four oclock in the evening I went for a little ride in the buggy. [3]

Reflecting the fast pace and overlapping character of her life, Kimball fits a child's death and funeral, family baths, and buggy ride into only one sentence. These kinds of troubles abound in the writings of LDS women, so much so that I often wondered how these women and men had time or energy to sit down and record their thoughts in any length or detail.

On the other hand, in contrast to these descriptions of the arduous realities of pioneer life, LDS women writers frequently employed idealized nature, garden, and, especially, flower imagery throughout their personal, periodical, and monographic writings. Sometimes writers employed homey agricultural metaphors in an offhand manner in order to express simple truths. Bird Robinson, for example, took time to write to a non-Mormon newspaper in order to support polygamy during the final and ultimately successful late-nineteenth century campaign by the federal government against the LDS marriage practice. She wrote spiritedly in defense of her community, emphasizing the central importance of raising children in the lives of herself and her younger plural, or "sister" wife:

> We have endeavored to have our thoughts purified and exalted, even as a garden cleansed by a careful gardener from weeds, while we have been bearing these precious plants, which we now wish to educate and train to lives of usefulness and happiness that they may be prepared to live and advance through all eternity.[4]

Sometimes, LDS women writers employed flower and garden symbolism in the extremely idealized and "flowery" manner of contemporary Anglo-American Victorian women's literature. This sentimentalized imagery appears especially in Mormon women's poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a prototypical example of this idealized, poetical nature imagery, in 1880, Hannah Tapfield King, a prominent and popular leader and poet among LDS women, wrote a few lines of thanks and praise to a friend, Margaret T. Smoot, in reply to a gift of a vase filled with roses. Sentiment abounds in the lines:

> The flowers, that in their language tell,
> In whisperings, I love so well! . . .
> . . . . . .
> And Heaven itself feels beaming round me,
> As though in floral chains it bound me!
> . . . . . .
> I'd form a coronal for thee
> Of rosy gems, from thorns all free!

Their beauty, and their perfume, too
Alone! alone! should live for you![5]

These kinds of lines—the homey agrarian, the unrelentingly romantic, and everything in between—seemed light years away from the frank and often brutally curt discussions of life and death in the LDS communities of the Southwest. How could I reconcile the disparity? What was the relationship between these two prominent themes within the turn-of-the-century literature of LDS women?

I came to see that the ubiquitous and often sentimentalized employment of nature and flower imagery by LDS women writers was vital to interpreting and understanding their often difficult and rough lives. This seeming disjuncture and juxtaposition between the realities of life in the turn-of-the-century LDS community, on the one hand, and the employment of nature and flower symbolism, on the other hand, was, in actuality, an intimate balance and connection. The flower symbolism supported, expedited, and justified those difficult lives, while the difficult lives were the fertile ground from which the flower symbolism grew and flourished. Nature and flower symbolism was not only a descriptive, but also a didactic, instructive, and critical set of images and models. The flower and nature symbolism provided an idealized and triumphant gloss of women's lives, but it did this in a complex, subtle, and multifaceted fashion.

But what were women saying about their lives by means of flower imagery? I needed to understand what women were expressing with this imagery at the same time that I was trying to correlate it with their life experiences. I needed to know why Bird Robinson found nature imagery so powerful a tool for her pro-polygamy arguments and what it meant that King and Smoot communicated with each other by means of flowers and poetry in order to express their affection for each other. Were these two isolated literary incidents—Robinson's and King's writings—actually symbolically connected? And, if they were connected, how and why?

A complex and sometimes contradictory picture developed for me as I focused on these questions of why and how. Women writers continually, repetitively employed nature imagery for a purpose. I came to see that LDS women writers, mining mainstream popular literature, employed flower and nature imagery especially in their poetry, but also in essays, sermons, straightforward reports—even offhand textual asides—as an acceptable and non-confrontational popular, female-centered theology. With this theology, Mormon women writers argued for the importance of the abstract concept of femaleness, as well as the centrality of women's roles within the family, everyday life of the community, and even within the overarching LDS plan

of salvation. Nature and flower symbolism served as a theological method and mode of argument, and this theological voice expressed a clearly LDS, but also clearly female point of view. LDS women writers utilized nature and flower imagery in order to justify and explicate difficult daily trials and also to fill in the gaps within a community in which women were key players, but often overshadowed by the community's patriarchal institutional and theological structures, even at this time when women held limited institutional independence. This nature-centered mode and method of argument was a voice calling from the literarily imagined wilderness—calling women to see and develop their roles and talents within the community, and calling the community as a whole to acknowledge their talents and roles. This is the study of how LDS women created a chain of symbolic flowers connecting themselves directly with an ideal and beautiful image of heaven, perfection, and happiness and, in the process, presented themselves as key actors in their religious community.

When Bird Robinson described herself as a vigilant gardener of her children, she tapped into an interlocking series of images and assumptions that placed the mother at the center of the home and heaven and made her a crucial figure in directing her children towards salvation. When King praised the flowers she had been given by a friend, she was also praising women generally and showing them to be the direct links between heaven and earth, God's earthly messengers, and visible models of the life of Jesus Christ. This imagery was so powerful because women writers were using it theologically to illuminate the vital questions of how women, men, and the divine interacted with each other and to highlight the key role that women played in the Mormon plan of salvation.

Yet neither Robinson nor King would likely have considered themselves theologians. Is it legitimate to label them as such by calling their combined products theology? In my mind, the term, theology, has two, related resonances: a scholarly, specific meaning and a more general meaning. The more scholarly and specific definition of the term insists that theology is a well-argued, logical, and comprehensive system of discussion and thought about the relationship between humans and the divine. Called to mind are theologians such as Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther who spent their lives painstakingly creating comprehensive discussions that would cover as many questions and issues as possible, so that human beings would know where they stood in respect to the divinity and how they should conceive of that divinity. This kind of comprehensive and logical theology is represented in the creeds and confessions of faith advocated by particular denominations.

But, I would argue, this kind of theology is rarely fully understood or discussed, except by theologians and ministers. Rather, most members of any given religious group or culture have a more general theological

understanding of how they stand in relationship to the divine. As members selectively reject, adapt, and adopt elements of their "official" theology, they develop a working, popular theology—popular in the sense that it stands outside of the institutional structures of their church, not that it is in some way less important or effective than formalized creeds and confessions.[6]

The theology that shows up in the nature and flower imagery is an interesting mix of both these general and specific ideas about theology. On the one hand, women writers created a general, popular theology that was piggybacked on to the more officially recognized cosmology and anthropology of the LDS church. Mormon women writers creatively extended Mormon cosmology—a cosmology, significantly, in which knowledge about God was derived less from scholarly exposition and more from direct revelation from God. Mormon women writers utilized their religion's expectation that as individuals they would find their own true relationship with God and, in this way, created a supplemental theology that filled in and expanded some of the more defined positions of the church about maleness and femaleness, men and women. They explored the revelatory opportunities of Mormonism and, thus, helped to define the boundaries of their religious community.

As they filled in the gaps, women writers inevitably also sometimes challenged and contradicted the more established theological tradition they were working within. While in contemporary LDS theology, as will be seen, men were presented as the leaders and foundations of the church, in the nature-centered, female-identified theological arguments, men and maleness, on the surface, were much more peripheral. Instead, in this theological universe, the world was constructed from and revolved around women and femaleness. But this close-to-exclusive focus ended up being more of a balance than a challenge to the official, patriarchal focus of the church. We must read this theology as did its original audience—in conjunction with the institutionally authoritative statements from the church and male leaders. Thus, nature and flower theology contains within itself the seeds of a more serious, but rarely utilized challenge to the more recognized theological tradition. This is theology in the general sense because, in the end, it was supplemental and largely dependent. It was part of an already established system of thought and tradition and it could not have existed without that tradition.

I would also argue that this discourse is theological in the more specific and comprehensive sense in that, taken as a body, it lays out a logical and comprehensive argument—or at least clearly works from logical and comprehensive foundational assumptions. Using evidence from the natural world, interpreting natural laws through literary imagery, and employing a complex system of analogy, LDS women writers talked in great detail about God and about the relationship between women, men, and divinity. These

writers developed an identifiable, effective mode of literary, theological argument that allowed them to address crucial cosmological and gender questions. This theological imagery rests on the foundations of Mormon theology, and yet, to a certain extent, it maintains its own, self-contained logic and method of expression. Though supplemental and dependent from a long view, this theology is well developed and comprehensive when dealing with issues surrounding women and femaleness. LDS women writers presented a consistent and theologically argued case for the eminence of women and femaleness within a largely patriarchal institutional and theological structure.

Perhaps the best way to think about this phenomenon is to use Charles H. Lippy's discussion of popular religiosity in which he describes how participants in this phenomenon utilize and adapt a "central zone" of beliefs and practices to their own lives and practicalities. He writes:

> As individuals draw on this central zone and on subsidiary zones [of religious beliefs and practices], they erect for themselves worlds of meaning, they create identities for themselves, they engage in the age-old task of religion by finding a way to make sense out of their lives. . . ."Popular religiosity" refers to this dynamic process of creating and maintaining personal worlds of meaning and the interconnectedness of the religiosity of a people within a given society.[7]

LDS women writers worked from a "central zone" of Mormon beliefs and practices, but employed elements of popular, literary culture to adapt and expand this central zone in order to make it relevant for their own lives and issues.

One of the fascinating aspects of this imagery is that it derives from a self-conscious and oft-expressed program by LDS women writers to acknowledge and praise the lives and roles of women within the community. However, I see little direct evidence that LDS women writers deliberately set out to create a separate theological voice or system. The theological aspect of nature and flower imagery appears to be a communal by-product of LDS women writers adapting available symbolic tools, rather than writers carefully and self-consciously spinning out a theological system. It is not so much that these writers decided that by means of flower and nature imagery they could closely link women and femaleness and the divine realm. Rather, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, these writers sensed that the foundational assumptions of nature and flower imagery would effectively serve to further their attempts to lift up and praise women's lives and roles. The theological aspects of this imagery were a

largely unforeseen result of the more general attempt to find a female voice within the community. And yet for all the mixture of self-conscious motivation and simple adaptation of available symbolic and literary resources, the assumptions and arguments within nature and flower imagery are strikingly comprehensive, logical, and most definitely theological in both the general and specific sense.

This is not to suggest that the theology of nature symbolism was, in the modern sense of the term, a purely feminist endeavor. Many of the arguments and assumptions would be classified with what has been termed the "separate spheres" worldview of the Victoria era and the "maternalistic" movement of the late nineteenth century through early twentieth centuries.[8] These Mormon women authors were arguing not so much that women's roles as mothers and community care-takers should change, though sometimes they made this argument. Rather, they were arguing that women's roles, women's work, women's strengths should be valued as much as men's—a kind of different, but equal arrangement of genders. Protestant women of the nineteenth century, using assumptions about the crucial role of mothers within the home, formed voluntary associations and pushed into the public eye programs that benefited women and children. Similarly, through this theological imagery Mormon women publicly presented the importance of women by arguing that women's place in the home gave them distinct and crucial responsibilities to take care of their communities, both socially and spiritually. They aimed for a shift in recognition and respect for women as mothers, more than a shift in social structures that would change women's roles. When Bird Robinson and Hannah T. King employed nature and flower imagery for very different purposes and to very different effect, they were both expressing and enhancing women's crucial presence within the community.

As with much of the more general ideology surrounding gender in the nineteenth century, however, oftentimes LDS women went beyond different but equal and clearly argued for different and better. While this is not unusual in the more mainstream context of American society, it is an intriguing development in a community that, even more than contemporary mainstream American culture, had and continues to have a self-conscious and thoroughgoing patriarchal structure. Indeed, thinly-veiled behind the expositions touting the polygamous family arrangement and sometimes directly following apparently genuine and whole-hearted support of the patriarchal nature of the LDS community, was an abiding anger that women's lives and roles had been overlooked and undervalued. As will be seen, this anger could congeal into clear and cutting diatribes against both men and maleness. Theological talk by means of nature and flower imagery

was a way by which LDS women could not only support and speak about their established roles within the home and church, but also press forward their critiques in a socially acceptable form and manner.

This nature-centered, supplemental, symbolic theology is also intriguing because it sat hidden in plain sight of men and women of the contemporary nineteenth-century LDS society, as well as modern-day scholars. In much the same way that Jane Tompkins has argued that nineteenth-century popular sentimental novels were masked "cultural work" on the part of mainstream women novelists to raise the importance of women and femaleness, so LDS women writers employed nature and flower imagery to praise and discuss women in careful, but cloaked ways.[9] Nature and flower imagery allowed women to become a discursive and theological force within their faith community—to even occasionally contradict and challenge the norms of that community—but, in such a way that they did not attract undue antagonism. The actual messages and arguments made within this theological imagery are often not surprising—these were arguments and assumptions about women made throughout contemporary American culture. More noteworthy is that these arguments were made by means of a popular, literary discourse, and that this discourse played easily between a popular, American literary and symbolic consciousness and the more particular, LDS worldview and cosmology.

THE ARGUMENT

How and why did LDS women writers adapt and adopt this surprising nature-centered theological imagery in order to explore the vital issues of their lives and faith? I will begin to answer this question in the first chapter when I fill in some of the background of the times, and examine the phenomenon of nature religion within American culture. Catherine Albanese and others have noted that, from the Native American inhabitants in ancient times up until present-day New Agers, Americans have had a continuous and religious engagement with their natural surroundings. When LDS women employed nature and flower imagery, they were simply the latest American expositors of this nature religion. Specifically, LDS women writers adopted a popular, mainstream, largely female-identified, and current form of nature religion that appeared in what anthropologist Jack Goody has termed "the language of flowers" poetry and literature so popular in Victorian sentimental literature. Women writers across the Anglo-American context employed this theological imagery. LDS writers were following religious trends within mainstream popular culture.

To say that this symbolism was popular at the time does not fully answer the question of how and why LDS women writers embraced and developed it for their own purposes. Indeed, the key to fully answering this question is that LDS women writers both adopted this nature and flower symbolism and adapted it to become a mode of theological exposition and commentary meaningful within the Mormon context. Thus, in chapter two, my task will be to more clearly explain this adaptation. While there are many aspects and nuances relating to this adoption and adaptation, I will focus on the two main explanations for why LDS women were attracted to this imagery. First, within the theology as articulated by LDS scriptures and church officials, women scriptural figures and divinities such as Eve and the Mother(s) in Heaven played pivotal roles in the salvational plan, and yet little was said within the theology to explicate these figures as role models for real, flesh-and-blood Mormon women. Further, flower and nature imagery, as a theological tool for women, was appropriated during a time when the community was seeking to standardize all aspects of beliefs and practices and looking for ways to convey LDS theology in a coherent manner and method. In other words, there was both a theological opening and a theological need, and LDS women writers took advantage of the opening and filled the need with theological arguments articulated by means of nature and flower imagery.

In chapter three, focusing on the Mormon cultural context, I will continue to explicate the reasons that LDS women writers adopted and adapted nature and flower imagery. I will argue that nature and flower symbolism did not by random chance become a theological discourse among Mormon women writers. Nature and flower symbolism had deep and meaningful resonance within the community. In the mid-nineteenth century, the group journeyed across the plains to Utah, and then afterwards settled down in the severe circumstances of the desert Southwest. In the description of these encounters in LDS literature, we see that nature became a deadly obstacle, but also the nurturing foundation of life. The importance and omnipresence of nature was emblazoned on the collective literary consciousness of the Mormon community.

Finally, this mode of discourse within the LDS community was largely, though not exclusively, employed by women writers. Especially when conveyed by poetry, it was a female-identified symbolic language and method of expression. Women writers linked poetry with both women and nature and argued that both were an especially appropriate way for women to communicate, and an especially appropriate way to talk about and describe nature and flowers. Ideally, women, nature, and poetry worked in tandem as a kind of force of divinity.

In chapter four, I will step directly into this nature imagery and show how these LDS women writers teased out the fundamental, theological relationship between humanity and divinity by asking crucial questions with an eye to gender: What is the relationship between men/maleness and divinity? What is the relationship between women/ femaleness and men/ maleness? And, most importantly, what is the relationship between women/ femaleness and divinity? LDS women writers used nature and flower imagery within a triangular, three-way equation that connected benevolent nature, women/ femaleness, and certain abstract virtues. Within the nature and flower poetry and imagery, and as is implied by the structure of the questions, Mormon women writers found a dualistic system in which maleness and femaleness were clearly defined. This dualistic, but complementary system fit easily into the LDS worldview that encompassed a male deity and his female counterpart(s) and also advocated that their gendered being constituted the basic, material foundation of the universe. Within this LDS worldview, they argued that femaleness as a purely virtuous universal fundamental substance was an integral part of the divine realm and the plan of salvation. Through this identification between women and the divine, LDS women argued in the Victorian mode of equating women and higher spiritual qualities, but because they found their evidence in revelatory encounters with nature, they took the argument to the symbolic and theological level of persuasion and proof.

Building on these findings, I will argue that flower and nature imagery was utilized by LDS women authors to more specifically describe, interpret, and advocate for women's already existing and already accepted roles within the home, the church, and the community (chapter five). As in most communities within contemporary American culture, LDS women were expected to live out their lives within their families of origin and families of marriage as daughters, wives, and mothers. Within the LDS theological understanding of eternal progression, humans began their existence as spirit children, born into a pre-mortal existence from the pairing of father and mother divinities. Spirit children had to be born into mortality in order to eventually attain to the highest, eternal happiness in the afterlife. Therefore, as guardians and teachers of these spirit children, Mormon mothers were crucial players in this salvational process. LDS women writers used nature and flower symbolism to argue for the primary and vital importance of women's roles within the home and community as mothers to their families and the larger church community. By means of this symbolism and, again, by employing the potent combination of omnipresent physical evidence and analogy, they directly equated home with preexistence/ heaven, with the Garden of Eden, and with Zion as the home of the

true believers of God. Mothers became the central, creator figure within this mortal paradise of the home; mothers were God's representative to the worldly, his earthly counterparts and messengers.

In the final chapter (chapter six), I will examine how LDS women writers utilized nature and flower imagery and symbolism in order to equate femaleness and women with the suffering and resurrection of the ultimate incarnation of divinity, Jesus Christ. Inherent in this equation was a thoroughgoing connection between women and suffering. LDS women writers framed human trials and tribulations within an LDS understanding of the structure of salvation and demonstrated that suffering was a necessary tool of purification and testing, as well as proof of a greater reward in the afterlife. Women's trials and troubles were equated with the sufferings of Jesus Christ as he selflessly sacrificed himself for the salvation of others.

Yet within the literature of LDS women, the suffering of Jesus Christ and mortals was continuously, symbolically overcome when writers utilized the literary tool of the cycles of flowers and nature. LDS women authors used nature and flower imagery, connected with the tropes of youth and memory, to relieve suffering through a moment of experientially based relief. This literary release from suffering was particularly meaningful because the seasonal rebirth and re-flowering was described as being a sign of the ultimate resurrection into eternal happiness. This became a ritual, textual, expiation and theodicy of great power. Women writers employed nature imagery to release this suffering on the immediate, mortal level and to demonstrate the ultimate, eternal reward for those who suffered on earth.

By connecting women and suffering, the writers argued, on the one hand, for the indestructible make-up of femaleness and women, but also, by means of this assumption, they argued that women must live quietly within their traditional roles. They wanted a radical re-assessment of the importance of the seemingly mundane lives of women. In even their most trivial actions, women were key players in the game of apocalyptic eschatology as they attempted by their examples to bring as many people as possible to the Mormon truth. They were a plainly seen and, by necessity, unacknowledged, humble society of suffering christs born to be the representatives of God's grace and love. In their own small way, women were born to show the way to follow the example of Jesus Christ in even the most seemingly unimportant daily events. Their being and actions represented a spiritual and salvational grassroots revolution, not a social upheaval.

As faithful LDS women writers sought to actively live their religion according to the authoritative beliefs and practices of their church, they

also sought to shape these authoritative models to be more realistic and meaningful for their own situations. By means of a symbolic yarn created by pen on paper, women writers sought to darn over the questions and contradictions about what it meant to be a woman in the Mormon community. In the process, of course, new questions and fissures appeared, replacing the old and continuing the catch-up game between the symbolic, idealistic level of religion and the realities of daily life. From the perspective of an outsider many years after the fact, LDS women were in some ways successful, in some ways not, in some ways created positive forces for themselves, and in some ways negative. Women writers constructed a female-centered, textual landscape that stood in both contrast and complement to the religious landscape of a male-centered hierarchy and theology. When we pay attention to it, this alternate landscape shifts our horizons and our views of the LDS community as a whole. Instead of seeing simply a patriarchal theology and institution, we discover women and femaleness emerging as powerful forces and symbols within the practical reality of the Mormon community.

In the end, I found that the some of the problems posed and then abandoned were answered, though not in the ways I anticipated. While I had originally thought to document the specific actions taken by male and female leadership at this time in order to highlight how women were gradually deprived of some of their institutional authority within the Mormon Church, I ended up, instead, documenting a symbolic and theological discourse which sought to establish the ultimate and vital importance of women and femaleness. When I planned to describe the one-to-one relationship between the everyday lives of women and the arguments of nature and flower poetic imagery, I ended up finding that, by means of this imagery, the specific joys and sorrows were interpreted so that they were transformed into literary moments heavy with eschatological meaning. The outlines of the questions remained in transfigured form, and the answers—or the beginning of answers—were found in unforeseen places within the life and history of the community.

These questions and answers go beyond the specific, LDS context. In the details of nature and flower imagery, we can see the more general truth that theological necessity breeds unexpected, even endless theological inventiveness. The particulars vary from context to context, but the search for satisfying significance and expression remains across time and space. This is not simply a story of the particular, LDS adoption and adaptation of a popular mode of discourse; this is also a case study of the more general process whereby religious meaning is generated with whatever tools of discourse are readily available. From the individual to community levels,

answers to crucial religious and cultural questions are cobbled together from available institutional, literary, oral, and popular resources. Answers are not obtained unquestioningly from a single, authoritative source, even when that source may outline and inform the outcome. Religious and cosmological interpretation and meaning-making is found in just about every facet of life in any given community. The trick is to find these places and take them seriously. In many ways, this inevitable theological improvisation is the where we witness in most concentrated form the strains and contested issues of a religious group. In this way, we create a much fuller, richer understanding of that particular community of faith, but also of religious communities in general.

While we can observe here how religious meaning is created and employed, we can also note that this meaning is riven with fractures, contradictions, and overlaps. Women writers created a theological universe in which femaleness appears to be the centrally important element and foundation, a kind of parallel universe that sometimes contradicted the more patriarchal focus of the church. And yet, this vision existed in the minds and on the literary pages of Mormon women writers and readers quietly and comfortably in tandem with the more official theologies of the church. We come to see that, especially in respect to gender norms and roles, religious traditions frequently exhibit oppositions and inconsistencies as members of these traditions seek to encompass and explain the injustices and sorrows inevitable in every human life and every human religious community. This case study explicates not only the details of a particular period, church, and place, it also demonstrates the most basic reality of religious traditions across time and space. Religious meaning and discourse are continually created in response to the realities of life and become, not static answers, but, instead, a messy, confusing, but profoundly creative process.

One last note, I have not edited quotes from the primary source materials. In order to give the reader an authentic sense of the sources, I have left intact all grammatical and spelling errors.

Chapter One

The Wider Cultural Context and the Mormon Sources

THE AMERICAN CONTEXT AND THE "LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS"

Before examining in detail how Mormon women adopted and adapted nature and flower imagery as a theological mode of discussion and argument, we must ask the questions: Where can we place this literature and nature and flower imagery within the larger, American religious and cultural streams of the time? What was the state of Mormon women's literature at this time? Why and what were LDS women writing at this time?

The use of flower and nature symbolism within the literature of Mormon women was heavily influenced by experiences, beliefs, and practices particular to the Mormon community. This imagery was written and interpreted from within LDS worldviews. Nonetheless, LDS women authors and poets developed and adapted flower, garden, and nature imagery from the wider women's literary culture of the United States. The nature-centered work of LDS women writers is a clear variation and expression of what has been termed "the culture of flowers" or "language of flowers" popular literature that flourished in the United States in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In other words, this was by no means a unique, LDS phenomenon, but, rather, quite the opposite. To fully understand and appreciate the specificity of how LDS women employed and understood nature and flower imagery, therefore, we must make a bit of side trip and first place their work within the American literary and cultural context. This theological symbolism was part of an extended network of cultural and historical developments within American culture as a whole.

From available evidence, the Victorians in both the United States and England had a long-term love affair with flowers, nature, and everything

related to flowers or nature. In *An Age of Flowers,* Doris L. Swarthout lightheartedly, yet convincingly, chronicles the mid- to late-nineteenth century obsession with an idealized and sentimentalized vision of nature and flowers. She notes, for instance, the immense popularity, among women and girls, of flower-centered activities such as the pressing, drying, and waxing of flowers as well as the making of paper or silk flowers; the rising interest in both indoor and outdoor gardening; and the almost religious exercise of walking in and communing with nature.[1] About this last activity Swarthout writes: "Walking into the woods was akin to entering a cathedral. Here life was pure, rising naturally from the earth without man's innovations and clumsiness."[2] Through a wide variety of experiences, nature and flowers were seen as the ultimate good, the ultimate purity, and the ultimate spiritual teachers for these Victorian seekers.

The "language of flowers" literature of the mid- to late-nineteenth century grew out of this Victorian enrapture with nature. Even today remnants of the once wildly popular "language of flowers" genre exist in, for instance, the small novelty books, often sold by the cash register line, that depict various flowers with accompanying verses. We can also discern the vestiges in the high percentage of greeting cards with floral designs and related, often floral thoughts. Nowadays these remnants and vestiges seem a bit overwrought, maudlin, and trivial, but, significantly, they are also a highly effective means of maintaining connection and communication with others through inoffensive, watered-down, universal symbols and comforts. And certainly, a gift of actual flowers is often the safest, most satisfying gift that can be made between neighbors, friends, lovers, family members, even strangers. We can still understand the "language of flowers" as a means of generic and universal exchange and communication; however, in the nineteenth century, the use and depiction of flowers was omnipresent, especially within floral poetry books and "language of flowers" dictionaries.

In both the United States and England, countless often lavishly and colorfully illustrated floral dictionaries and floral poetry books were produced and consumed during the last half of the nineteenth century. These dictionaries were not simply pretty picture and poetry books. The "language of flowers" genre was dedicated to delineating an alphabet and grammar expressed through the use and arrangement of certain flowers in a prescribed manner. In other words, this endeavor was the self-conscious creation of a symbolic system of visual expression and communication.[3] This was flower arrangement as prose production.

Jack Goody, an anthropologist who has written much on the meaning of flowers across cultures, notes that the "language of flowers" literature

first came to the fore in the early part of the nineteenth century. [4] The earliest dictionaries of this genre were published in France and quickly became hugely popular on the continent, in Great Britain, and finally, a bit later, in the United States.[5] According to Beverly Seaton, "language of flowers" books reached their height of popularity in the United States in the 1840s through 1850s.[6] A quick perusal of the nineteenth-century literature section of any large library confirms the success of this particular genre—one is bound to find these floral dictionaries liberally sprinkled throughout the poetry section.

At first, authors such as Madame Charlotte de Latour produced "language of flowers" books as examples of "oriental" means of secret and delicate communication between lovers.[7] By the early nineteenth century, popular interest in this purportedly mysterious, "oriental" custom had taken on a life of its own. While Latour is generally considered to be the first author who popularized the list of flowers and meanings within the European "language of flowers," many other authors after Latour took up the "language of flowers" and refined and added to these listings.[8] These later and various authors had different reasons for expanding upon the literature. Many, like Latour, saw it as a way of creating a secret and refined way to communicate between lovers or friends.[9] Others produced books filled with colorful and scientifically correct prints of a wide variety of flowers with the purpose of educating young ladies in a pleasant, safe, and botanical manner.[10] Some placed the "language" in the tradition of Christianity, or, alternatively, in the occult, magical tradition in order to explain its origins, power, and popularity.[11] Still others were interested in working toward a combination of all of these goals. Oftentimes, authors stepped away from the strictly dictionary format and gathered together flower-centered poetry that contained uplifting and inspirational messages, but did not have the formal symbolism or dictionary "definition" attached to each specific kind of flower.[12] Each author had his or her own particular reason for contributing to the genre; however, most important to understand, is that all wrote almost exclusively for an audience of women and girls. In the United States, as Seaton has shown, this was a language and symbolism for, about, and, largely, by women.[13]

The "language of flowers" literature and the more general Victorian interest in nature were part of a long American religious tradition. This kind of intense engagement with nature as salvific agent brings to mind Catherine Albanese's exploration of nature religion in the United States, and her discovery that, throughout the country's history, Americans have often described nature as a religious teacher, foundation, and purification. There were quite distinct strands of nature religion: Native American

spirituality, Republican nationalism, Transcendentalism, even alternative forms of healing.[14] Yet, to differing degrees, according to Albanese, these practitioners of nature religion all looked to the abstract laws of an idealized nature, or immersed themselves wholeheartedly in the material reality of nature in order to find the highest human and divine truths.

In her discussion, Albanese uses the term religion in the broadest sense as a mode of thinking and understanding that leads to patterned ways of behaving, acting, and, in some cases, ritualizing action.[15] In this definition, religion is not necessarily a self-identified community or church. Many of the strands of the tradition that Albanese identifies, especially early on, did not have institutionalized and organized bases of operation. Albanese notes of her interpretation of nature religion: "Unorganized and unacknowledged as religion, it is—given the right places to look—everywhere apparent. But it is also a form of religion that slips between the cracks of the usual interpretive grids—or that, more slippery still, evades and circumvents even adventurous ways to name it."[16] Across the centuries, these nature-focused thinkers and practitioners tapped into an already existing, but non-institutional vein of religious engagement with America's nature which began with the Puritan encounter with a wild New England and the, to Europeans, strikingly alien Native American cultures of the region.

Some of the stands of nature religion that Albanese explores did have clearly stated belief systems and practices. However, for the purposes of this project, most engaging and relevant is her discovery that this regularly utilized substratum of American thinking about nature easily and with no apparent paradox could be activated in conjunction with already existing and highly organized (usually) Christian faiths. Nature, in some form or other, was thought to represent the perfection of Edenic bliss, or a set of God's unbreakable laws—the past paradise, as well as the enticing and millennial future of the new nation.[17] Nature served as another aid to revealing the presence and reality of a Christian God. The landscape became an ever-truthful prophet to seekers across denominations and faiths.

I view the "culture of flowers" literature, including the literary work of LDS women, as another branch of this American nature-centered religious complex. The development of the literary Victorian American interest in nature, flowers, and gardening can be interpreted as a popularized variation of nature religion. This was a variation that sought for salvation and peace in literary visions of the beauties of the land, sea, and sky. Most importantly, as with all of the various strands of nature religion, this is a literary tradition that acted as a complement to, rather than a replacement of already existing Christian faiths. This tradition developed largely in conformity with basic,

Christian theological assumptions, but it allowed a wider and more popular scope for writers to explore the important issues of the day. It was an alternative mode of discourse that employed a long-standing American enrapture with nature and flowers.

Within this Victorian, literary variation of nature religion, nature was an especially effective theological focus for women writers, or those writing about women, because of a long association between women and nature within Western culture. Anthropologists Claude Levi-Strauss and Sherry Ortner have contended that all cultures operate on a set of binary oppositions that equate men with culture as active creators and women with nature as passive, biological receivers. In other words, according to Levi-Strauss and Ortner, the opposition stands as men:culture::women:nature.[18]

Much has been written to challenge this contention of universality—a contention that Ortner herself now finds problematic and too simple.[19] Particularly effective in destabilizing and complicating this set of universal oppositions is the work of Carol P. MacCormack, Maurice and Jean H. Bloch, and L. J. Jordanova.[20] These scholars have argued that the anthropological assertion of a cross-cultural equation of nature and women is actually the manifestation of a more specific Western, Enlightenment-based association between women and nature. Maurice and Jean H. Bloch contend that during the eighteenth century, French and English Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau looked to nature as the highest, most ordered authority to set up against the already entrenched powers of the church and monarchy.[21] Nature was a "category of challenge," a tool for political and scientific innovation and, therefore, nature became for these Enlightenment thinkers something positive and freeing—something potentially revolutionary. Setting themselves back into the Enlightenment context, the Blochs argue: "Nature is no longer something to be despised as low; it is rather to be cherished, and, above all, it is the source whereby society, morals, education, even medicine, are to be reformed and purified."[22] Nature was positively re-imagined as an agent of education and change.

But Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau did not create a simple and thoroughly positive reevaluation of the role of nature, at least partly because of the already established equation between women, the biological processes of child-birth and child-rearing, and nature.[23] According to the argument that set up nature as the primal political, social, and scientific authority, women as being closest to nature would have seemed to be the best and most powerful agents of change and challenge. Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers, however, were conservative when it came to their interpretation of the role of women within society: they wanted women to continue to function in their home-centered and circumscribed

roles as wives and mothers.[24] So, for instance, many Enlightenment thinkers argued for the "natural" moral and purifying power of women within the home.[25] But they also argued that women, because of their closeness to nature, were more unstable, weak-minded, easily swayed, and open to the corrupting influences of organized religion. Women were, in other words, positively close to nature in their already established home roles, but dangerously and negatively close to nature in the public and political spheres. According to this Enlightenment logic, women, like nature, needed to be mastered and controlled in order for them to function most effectively in the coming scientific and political revolutions. For these thinkers, women's closeness to nature was their great strength and was the foundation of their limited authority, but it was also their ultimate downfall and the reason for their lower social, economic, and political positions.

The Enlightenment reevaluation of nature which became incorporated into American nature religion, therefore, was rather complex and created much more than a simple and straightforward equation between women and debased nature and men and higher culture. Women were associated with nature on a spectrum of positive and negative interpretations, though usually with the ultimate purpose of justifying and explaining the already existing roles of women within the home and society.

The "language of flowers" literature and poetry is a particularly fascinating evolution within the various strands of nature religion. In this nineteenth-century literature, the complexity of the equation between women and nature still stands, but the more negative side of this evaluation is muted, de-politicized, and interpreted through a largely Christian frame of reference so that the qualities of humility, weakness, and sensitivity are employed to present women as the Christian moral exemplars and leaders of the human race. In this Victorian understanding, often classified as a "separate spheres" worldview, women are described as being the moral, spiritual, and emotional superiors of men, but in modern hindsight, to an extraordinarily idealized, sentimentalized, unrealistic, and even sensationalized extent. Women's influence is seen as the glue that keeps society together and the home-centered roles of mother and wife are presented as being the key roles for establishing and maintaining social and moral order. The private realms become, more than ever, the foundation for public good and public organization. In essentials, the Enlightenment view of women has not changed much, but the emphasis has shifted so that, as Lori Ginzberg and others have argued, women felt confident and even compelled to extend their purifying influence from the home to society as a whole, but with home always as their true base of operations and authority.[26]

A brief look at three English-language versions of the "language of flowers" literature demonstrates the basic and repeated outline and contents of this genre, as well as its inherent gender-focused cultural assumptions. Beverly Seaton has shown that the "language of flowers" literature was an attempt to find support for popular social values in the certainty of nature: "Thus, to think that the flower emblems are 'natural' is to think that the social values outlined in the set of meanings are validated by nature."[27] The basic assumptions within this genre helpfully delineate how Victorians understood gender relations within this "separate spheres" worldview and how they sought to find these relations within the laws of nature.

Henry Gardiner Adams produced *The Language and Poetry of Flowers* in 1858 (it was reprinted in 1870). The book is typical because Adams focused on a female audience, and many of the poems in the dictionary are written by women. The book is also representative of the genre because it contains poetry and prints dedicated to various flowers, introductory treatises on the reasons for their uses and meanings, and the ubiquitous indexes at the back which list a couple hundred flowers and what they symbolize (and vice versa).

Another helpful stopping place on the journey within the mainstream "language of flowers" is made in the work of the sister girl poets, Elaine and Dora Read Goodale. The many poems they wrote as preteens are almost totally concerned with describing and explicating nature, and one book, *In Berkshire with the Wild Flowers,* is wholly dedicated to poems about various kinds of wild flowers. Though not specifically "language of flowers" dictionaries, the Goodales' work stands as an example of the still nature- and flower-centered, yet more diffuse and poetry-focused version of the genre.

Finally, we will consider poetical works found in the *Ladies Repository,* a Methodist woman's magazine published in Ohio from the 1840s through the 1870s. This magazine features sermons, essays, fiction, and poetry targeted at Methodist women. The poets represented in the magazine employed nature and flower imagery in a more casual and dispersed manner than the Goodales, and, in both its purpose and format, the magazine is closest to how LDS women writers utilized nature and flower imagery within their own community.

As is often the case with "language of flowers" dictionaries and poetry, Adams is less interested in explicating the symbolism of particular flowers than in arguing more generally for the power and importance of the eternal message of flowers within the context of daily life. He protests against the usual assignment of the origin of the "language of flowers" to the "Turkish harem:" "Truly the *real* 'Language of Flowers' is no system of

unmeaning similitudes; there is a deeper significance attached to every plant and flower, indeed to every object in nature, than the mere sensualist or the shallow sentimentalist would imagine. . . ."[28] Standing firmly in the Christian-centered camp of the genre, Adams prefers to interpret flowers as silent, humble, and true messengers sent straight from the halls of heaven to the bosom of nature for the enjoyment and edification of all human beings.[29] The origin of the flower's symbolic power is, for Adams, its divine heritage. According to him, because of this heavenly descent, flowers' appearance and communication are more effective and authentic than the spoken or written word: their messages travel directly from the realm of the divine and into the innermost reaches of the human heart where they truthfully express the deepest feelings and experiences of humanity and divinity. Because flowers exist at the crossroads between the divine and mortal realms, they automatically access that part of the being of humans which is closest, if not identical, to God and eternity.

Given the association between flowers and divinity and purity, and given the contemporary assumptions about women's innately pure characters and beings, it is not surprising that in the "language of flowers" genre the highest natural symbol of divinity, the flower, is described as being inherently female. In this literature, femaleness and flowers are inextricably connected. As argued throughout Adams' book, because flowers so effectively express divinity and spirituality, they are naturally of interest to women, who also should express these qualities. Adams writes of flowers that: "they are considered as the fittest ornaments for female loveliness and childish innocence; and the most beautiful objects wherewith we can regale the sense in seasons of festivity and rejoicing."[30] An unnamed poet in the *Ladies Repository* goes one step further and specifically identifies flowers as female in the offhand phrase "the gentle sisterhood of flowers."[31] In their simple, day-to-day existence, both women and flowers point to higher, better, and eternal realms of existence. Femaleness, flowers, and divinity are equated in typical fashion in a poetical invocation of praise and thanksgiving to flowers:

> Oh, lovely flowers! the earth's rich diadem,
> Bright resurrection from her sable tomb,
> Ye are the eyes of Nature! her best gem—
> With you she tints her face with living bloom,
> And breathes delight in gales of rich perfume:
> Emblems are ye of heaven, and heavenly joy,
> And starry brilliance in a world of gloom,
> Peace, innocence, and guileless infancy,
> Claim sisterhood with you, and holy is the tie.[32]

Nature is a beautiful young woman holding within herself flowers which themselves are seen as female and as helpful and authentic reminders of the promise of the resurrection, the value of divine virtues, and the reality of the eternal, glorified realms of heaven. [33] For these contemporary authors, women and flowers are not only metaphorically similar, their very essences are interchangeable: each element can symbolically and literally stand in for the other. At their base, both nature and women, the poetry argues, partake generously of the divine, creative realm of existence.

Within the Goodales' work, motherhood and mother love are presented as being especially potent, mysterious and close to such divine authority. The girl poets have only the highest praise for the maternal state.

> O wondrous mother-love
> How strange, and deep
> With what vibrating thrill of tenderness!
> To give the glow, and lie a pallid flower!
> To give the light, and smile, and wait to weep!
> Sweet is thine infant's warm unconsciousness,
> But sweeter thy mysterious sacred power.[34]

Motherhood is the state that most associates femaleness with the creativity and nurturance of beneficent nature. The mother is the conduit that guides the infant to the earthly plane—the collaborator with God in the highest form of mortal creation. Significantly, Elaine and Dora Goodale dedicate to their mother *Apple-Blossoms: Verses of Two Children*. According to the Goodales, the love and nurture of their mother made possible the literal blossoming of their creative and poetic talents.[35] In the lines of the dedicatory poem, the girls' mother is transformed into Mother Nature, the sky, the sun—the nurturing aspects of earth and nature—while both the girls and their poetry become delicate flowers opening before her powerful and gentle care. Their mother becomes the physical manifestation of heavenly and spiritual care and sustenance. As spelled out within the nexus of flower and nature imagery, motherhood is the highest and most spiritual power open to women.

Appropriately, in the Goodales' work, the home, the premier realm of women and especially mothers, becomes almost coterminous with these aspects of benevolent and stable nature. In "My Window Curtain," Elaine Goodale describes how her room's open window has a natural curtain of greenery that lets in the scents and sights of beautiful nature and erases the boundary between home and nature.[36] Similarly, a poet in the *Ladies Repository* describes an idyllic cottage as open to the passing, flower-

scented breeze—no boundary exists between these two similar realms.[37] For Elaine and the magazine poet, the most perfect home is the one that is surrounded by and allows in the beautiful, natural elements in such a way that the resident female soul is nourished and replenished by them. The boundary between home and nature is real, but of no consequence because both the home and the realm of beneficent nature are female and both serve the same, symbolic purposes of comfort and nurture of the human body and soul. In this vision, home becomes an idealized, garden-surrounded realm of motherhood and femaleness.

The Goodales' idyll of female fulsomeness and fruitfulness, however, is not without its dangers, challenges, and threats. In the Goodales' natural and poetic vocabulary, the more wild and uncontrolled, yet necessary parts of nature serve as counterparts and challenges to the female beauty and generosity of the beneficent natural aspects. Expressing the contemporary assumptions about the character of men and maleness, these more ambiguous and troubling aspects of nature are usually configured as male. What develops is a binary separation between the beneficial, female-identified aspects of nature, and the destructive, male-identified parts of nature. Spring and summer are always female, winter is always male. Autumn is sometimes female and sometimes androgynous, depending on whether the harvest or the approach of winter's harsh weather is being emphasized.[38] The relentlessness and gloom of winter, as described in the Goodales' poetry, makes a compelling contrast to the benevolence, generosity, and joy of the more auspicious female natural agents. Just such a contrast and juxtaposition is effectively drawn in the poem entitled "Through Storm and Calm." The poet, Elaine, begs for the return of the ease and lightness of spring, the successor of cold-hearted winter and all his wild trappings.

> Winter is gone, his rudest storms are past,
> Then why, O why should happy spring delay?
> Burst into sunshine, gloomy sky, at last,
> Roll on the zenith of unclouded day.[39]

Winter is the cold, male replacement for all that is good and female in the round of seasons. The reality and relations of the genders are expressed in the round of seasons. Gendered, literary nature recapitulates and confirms the contemporary societal assumptions about gender.

This same kind of binary separation of nature also shows up in Adams' work, but both Adams and the Goodales are always more interested in exploring the female-identified, beneficial aspects of nature, and in these

detailed explorations, they further fill out Victorian assumptions about women and femaleness. Within the poetic discussions of beneficent nature, Jesus Christ is one of the most important figures for understanding these gender assumptions. Jesus Christ and flowers are available to all who will pay attention to their message, but they speak differently to each person. Thus: "[Flowers] admonish the prosperous, the proud, the uplifted in spirit; but to the poor, the lowly, and the fallen, they are as sympathizing friends, whispering words of comfort and hope, sharing their sorrows, and thus rendering the burden easier to bear."[40] Flowers are able to perform this double duty of admonishment and comfort because of their own humility and ability to recover and re-grow, their ability to be whatever each person needs to be his or her best—their ability to model the life of Jesus Christ as savior and teacher. Adams writes:

> Of all the creatures and objects which minister to man's wants, or pleasures, they are the gentlest, the most unresisting; he may crush them, trample on them, do with them as he will, yet there they are, ever smiling up in his face, yielding him their fragrance, their nutriment, their alleviation for bodily pain, and mental disquietude. . . .[41]

Like Jesus Christ, flowers are available to all who seek them, and, like Jesus Christ, they can take upon themselves suffering and abuse and still remain sympathetic and loving to all.

The last passage, which ostensibly speaks about flowers and plants, may strike the modern reader as somewhat disturbing because Adams equates indirectly, not only, flowers and Jesus Christ or Christ-like actions, but also flowers and women/femaleness, and, finally, flowers and women as able to endure unjust suffering for the greater good. For the reader, the flowers that lie crushed, but smiling and comforting, are also manifestly female in gender. The darker, less pleasant, yet logical side of the association between women and nature, therefore, is the close equation between salvific suffering, flowers, and women or femaleness. Towards the end of Adams' book, Marie Roseau finally plainly spells out this connection in a poem entitled "harebell. Submission." Roseau explicates the reason that the Hare-Bell has come to symbolize submission in the "language of flowers" lexicon. She argues that this is because of the flower's ability to withstand the rigors and trials of the implicitly male storm's battering, despite the delicate appearance of the harebell. She writes that the plant appears to be unable to survive even one storm, but when the winds blow, the harebell "gently boweth" its head until the storm is over:

> Then from the stormy conflict,
> With winning, quiet grace,
> Unharmed, once more it riseth
> To its own accustomed place.[42]

This quality of endurance in difficulties and challenges serves as a didactic example for the readers and reminds the author of a specific woman who:

> Tho' feeble, frail and helpless,
> God makes her strong to bear
> The storms of dark affliction,
> And weight of weary care.[43]

In strikingly parallel fashion, two poets in the *Ladies Repository* look to, respectively, a neglected vine and a female heliotrope for examples of unseen and quiet humility among the storms and scorching of nature.[44]

Like flowers, women are delicate, silent, and humble exemplars of correct living; they also are messengers from heaven, but in the living flesh—like Jesus Christ. Flowers, femaleness, and women are able to withstand the worst, usually male-generated troubles and trials and still serve as comforts and object lessons for all those around them. For these authors and their largely female readership, flowers serve as the ultimate and beautifully delicate example for women of self-sacrifice, virtue, and the paradox of mortality within immortality. They are botanical and female versions in miniature of Jesus Christ: floral models of the ideal life and behavior.

Within the popular "language of flowers" literature, then, appear the outlines of a systematic and strategic argument—or, perhaps, set of assumptions is a better term—made by both Victorian women and men authors about gender. This argument and set of assumptions about women and femaleness is important to understand, not the individual meanings that were assigned to each flower, or the proper way to "write" a flower letter. Certainly, most contemporary readers understood that violets stood for modesty, lilies purity, and roses love and beauty, but, beyond simple formulations such as these, it does not appear that women regularly communicated with each other or with their lovers by means of the complex grammar and vocabulary of the "language of flowers" dictionaries and indexes.[45] Indeed, the "language of flowers" was simply an epiphenomenal and logical development within a nineteenth-century society that relentlessly sought to lay the burden of moral purity and order on women, and, as part of this agenda, strove to find safe and uplifting pastimes for these supposed exemplars of purity and morality. As part of this literary branch

of nature religion, a more general belief developed that there was an organic, not-so-secret language of flowers and femaleness that women did or should know. Popular opinion held that women, poetry, flowers, and elevated, spiritual messages were closely associated; that each of these elements was ideally essentially similar; and that by reflecting off each other in a fruitful manner women, poetry, and flowers could more authentically act as conduits for God's grace, humility, and love. These arguments worked within the pre-given constraints of the equation between women and nature, and yet they shaped these constraints in a positive manner and shifted the assumptions about gender in women's favor. The use and enlargement of this symbolism was, ultimately, a creatively conservative, defensive, and preservative endeavor. For these authors, flowers and nature proved that femaleness in the abstract and women in the flesh were the foundational elements of society.

THE LDS CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND: DATES, SOURCES, AND AUTHORS

When LDS women writers utilized nature and flower imagery for theological purpose, they were writing squarely within these sets of symbolic connections and social, theological assumptions. The next chapters will explore in some detail how and why LDS women poets and writers adopted and adapted this literary branch of nature religion. It is important to note here that due to various historical circumstances, this LDS adoption and adaptation was somewhat later than the height of popularity of the "culture of flowers" discourse in the American mainstream popular press. There is approximately a generation's lag between the mainstream and the LDS engagement with the "culture of flowers." In the mainstream most nature- and flower-centered books and poetry appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, whereas for the LDS community the height of popularity was the late nineteenth century.[46] Specifically, the span between 1880 and 1920 was the high-water mark of the literary and theological use of nature and flower imagery by LDS women writers.

A number of reasons account for why LDS women writers utilized nature and flower imagery most heavily during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and why they lagged behind developments in the wider culture. Most obviously, during the mid-nineteenth century when the "culture of flowers" literature was so popular in wider American culture, the LDS community was still in the midst of the difficult and all-consuming task of bringing the body of the church across the plains and then settling into the harsh desert environment of the

Southwest. However, during the late nineteenth century, LDS members consolidated and reinforced their gains. Many men and women were still battling the elements in the outreaches of Mormon colonies in Arizona, New Mexico, and Southern Utah, but there also developed by this time an educated, often somewhat urbanized class who had time to put pen to paper for extended periods of time. Time was the key here because, as a whole, the LDS community was fairly literate with a number of highly educated leaders and members. Time allowed men and women to develop internal systems of education, literature, and communication. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period when members were able to widen the literary and cultural streams they had developed from the founding of the church. Even in the 1830s through 1860s, members wrote journals, published newspapers, and organized cultural societies.[47]

The late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries was also a particularly difficult time span for the women of the church as they faced inward towards a community under increasing pressure and as they faced outward and presented a united front to the usually hostile, wider American society. The three decades from the 1880s until the teens of the twentieth century encompassed the most intense period of the conflict between the LDS church and the government of the United States over the issue of Mormon polygamy. At this time, the country shifted some of its attention away from the issues of slavery and Reconstruction and went all out to eradicate plural marriage as the second of the "twin relics of barbarism."[48] As will be discussed later on, for a number of reasons, LDS women felt the sharpness of this conflict with particular acuteness.

The 1880s were witness to a great florescence of LDS women's literary efforts, including the exploration and utilization of nature and flower imagery. In 1872, the *Woman's Exponent* was founded with the encouragement of the Mormon Church's second president, Brigham Young, and under the editorship of L. L. Greene Richards. The semi-official newspaper of the Relief Society, the *Exponent* was published in tabloid form regularly from every two weeks to every two months, depending on the number of submissions, the finances available, and the time and energy of the editors. It offered as literary fare sermons, informational and historical articles, local and national news, and, of course, poetry. As noted by Sherilyn Cox Bennion, the purposes of the periodical were several: "It would discuss all subjects interesting and valuable to women, report Relief Society meetings and other matters connected with the workings of that organization, encourage both new and established women writers, and provide an outlet for their work. Finally, it would furnish to the world an accurate view of

the grossly misrepresented women of Utah."[49] The newspaper was open to submissions and most authors and subscribers were Mormon women looking to make their literary voices heard, or seeking to keep current on all the doings of an increasingly scattered Mormon community. In this way, the *Exponent* straddled the line between a woman's magazine and religious journal—it strove to be both literary and spiritual nourishment for the women of the church. As Sheree Bench has argued, probably most importantly, the *Exponent* served as a place of textual conversation where women of the church dialogued with each other about the important issues of the day.[50] It was a forum of exchange and communication for LDS women.

When she took her place as editor in 1872, L. L. Greene Richards was only twenty-three years old. She gave up the position of editor in 1877 when she married and began to have a family. As a mother with grown daughters and, thus, with more available time, Emmeline B. Wells took over as editor and stayed in charge of the paper until its run ended in 1914.[51] From her position as editor and as wife of a member of the church presidency (Daniel Wells), she continued to climb in public prominence and power, eventually becoming the secretary and treasurer of the entire Relief Society and, finally, in 1912, the president of the organization, a position she held until her death in 1921.[52] With her increasingly high profile, Wells threw all of her weight behind the paper and sought to transform the *Exponent* into a solid and respected journal using, from internal evidence, the Boston-based *Woman's Journal* as a more secular model. Although circulation figures do not seem to have ever gone above one thousand, Bennion notes that at least one knowledgeable contemporary observer stated the paper had more influence in the political sphere than all other Utah newspapers combined.[53] Editors Greene and Wells forged a formidable political and literary force that was disproportionately influential within the wider Mormon community.

Wells was one of a group of educated elites who in the later part of the century contributed greatly to the florescence of LDS women's literature. She used her editorial and church positions in order to encourage continually other LDS women to express themselves with pen and paper. Wells wrote many of the articles, poems, editorials, and reports in the publication, but she also vigorously and consistently solicited the work of her friends and readership. In 1891, for instance, after the Woodruff Manifesto had suspended the practice of polygamy, thus also suspending the prosecution of the church and LDS members by the federal government, much of the passion that had fueled the work that appeared in the *Exponent* had dried up.[54] In response to the fewer contributions to the *Exponent,* Wells

aggressively addressed her readership on the editorial page of the periodical, urging all to continue to send their thoughts in written form: "Sisters, if you have ideas that will benefit others put them upon paper and send them to the press, they will reach a larger number of people in that way, and by that means you may be sowing some good seed that will eventually bear fruit. Remember the saying of Scripture 'cast your bread upon the waters it will return after many days.'"[55]

On plenty of other occasions on the *Exponent's* pages, Wells encouraged others to send in their work. Nonetheless, as editor, we can assume that she exercised considerable autonomy in choosing the work to be published in the periodical—and, indeed, the paper bears her strong and distinctive stamp. An enigmatic glimpse at Wells' editorial process can be seen in a short notice in a section of miscellaneous news in the August 1893, edition of the *Exponent.* Rather defensive in tone, Wells reminds the readers that she cannot publish all submissions, especially the obituaries, giving the reason that: "Sometimes articles are rejected because [u]nnsuitable, and it is not possible to make the explanations public."[56] These are intriguingly and intentionally vague lines that are trying to smooth over a specific conflict, but also give evidence that Wells was actively judging and selecting the materials that would appear in her paper—the material that she so vigorously solicited from her readership. Her public and authoritative roles allowed Wells to act as an intermediary or lightning rod for the concerns of her fellow churchwomen, and also allowed her to shape how these concerns would be communicated throughout the community of LDS women.

Outside of her work on the *Exponent,* Wells also inspired her women friends and acquaintances to literarily express themselves and then publish their work. Prolific poet, frequent contributor to the paper, and another effective employer of nature and flower imagery, Augusta Joyce Crocheron sent Wells a copy of her book (*Wild Flowers of Deseret*) along with an actual bouquet of flowers, apparently in tribute to the support and encouragement Wells had given to her poetic work.[57] Wells also regularly published histories of writers in the *Exponent,* including and especially biographies of the LDS women writers of Utah.[58] LDS women responded to such encouragement from their leaders and, moved by the circumstances of the time, they not only contributed to the *Exponent,* but published books of their own works. A number of LDS women poets published books in the 1880s and beyond. Besides Crocheron's *Wild Flower of Deseret,* Mary Jane Mount Tanner published *A Book of Fugitive Poems* in 1880; Reba Beebe Pratt, *The Sheaf of a Gleaner* in 1886; Hannah Cornaby her autobiography and poems in 1881; and Wells herself put out a compilation of poems, *Musings and Memories,* in 1896 and again in 1915.

Wells in her own writing frequently employed nature and flower imagery and it is no accident, therefore, that the height of the popularity of nature and flower imagery within LDS women's literature coincided closely with Wells' stewardship of the female Mormon literary scene.[59] From the poems and articles that were published inside and outside of the context of the *Exponent,* and from her own work, Wells as writer and publisher was a major factor in initiating and spreading the literary use of nature and flower imagery. In her public promotion and her private encouragement, Wells was a pervasive and formidable force that helped to shape the contours and contents of women's literary work in the turn-of-the-century LDS community.

With the publication of the *Exponent* and poetry books, with the strong literary and editorial leadership of Wells and others, the years of 1880 to 1920 were a kind of literary and poetic renaissance for LDS women. However, during this time period women even more frequently recorded their thoughts in diaries, journals, and autobiographies. These more private sources give us another view of the literary lives of LDS women and help to trace the development and employment of nature and flower imagery in fuller detail and depth.

The major distinction in the LDS material presented in this project, therefore, is between the public periodical or monographic literature and the personal writings of LDS women. The public and private literatures are quite different in purpose and form, but in some ways they are also quite similar because the LDS women composers of both types of literature faced the same issues whether they were writing in their personal diaries or for publication and public consumption. Most fundamentally, units of composition within both the public and private literature of LDS women are often very short in length and usually straightforward in style, form, and message. In public literature such as the *Exponent* or the published poetry of women like Augusta Joyce Crocheron, the units of composition were usually articles, poems, descriptions of events. Occasionally, the *Exponent* published a topical series or serial story, but, for the most part, these literary units took up a page or less of space. The shortness and simplicity of this public literature was the natural result of circumstances: they were a product of the small amount of free time in frontier LDS women's lives, even during the relatively more settled times of the late nineteenth century.

Mary Jane Mount Tanner in 1880 published a small volume of poetry with the financial help and emotional encouragement of friends. Her literary and personal life exemplifies the conditions under which and feelings with which LDS women often wrote literature for public consumption. In the early 1870s, Tanner became very sick after the birth of a son; she felt, in fact, that she was close to death.[60] Though she eventually did get well, the

long period she spent recovering in forced absence from her household duties created time for her to reflect on her neglected literary talent. Tanner became determined to reclaim that talent as she "wished to leave to posterity some record of myself. To contribute my mite to the world of literature."[61] She was proud of her work which appeared in the *Woman's Exponent,* the local press, and, finally, in her privately-published volume appropriately titled, *A Book of Fugitive Poems*. She, nonetheless, appears to have felt some resentment that her talent had not been allowed to develop further, that she was, in a sense, stifled by her duties as a mother and a housewife. Tanner explains in her memoirs, written only a few years after her book was published, that: "I have written in the midst of the confusion of the family with household cares pressing upon me, and subject to so many interruptions that I feel deserving of credit in doing so well as I have."[62] Tanner was happy about her literary accomplishments as they stood, but frustrated that, in her mind, she was unable to reach her full potential as a writer.

Augusta Joyce Crocheron, another frequent contributor to the *Exponent* and author of a published book of poetry, voices similar concerns in her 1880 poem, "To the Spirit of Poesy." Invoking and imploring the spirit of poesy in a fashion that models the ancient Greek poets' invocation of the Muses, Crocheron fears that she has somehow offended the creative spark because she was so preoccupied with her daily and homely duties. Yet, in the poem, she cannot abide the thought that she will never be able to write poetry again because for her it is a sustaining and refreshing force in her life. Crocheron begs as though a lover:

> Nay! take it not so, for thou knowest
> In my heart there is none like to thee,
> That I'm doubly alone when thou goest,
> Withdrawing thy pleasure from me.
> 'Tis pity enough to be weary
> With duties that crowded the day;
> Think how lonely the evening, and dreary,
> When I find thou hast flitted away![63]

Crocheron felt a great love and need for writing, but her writing time was limited and snatched here and there between her daily chores. For Crocheron and for most of her contemporary literary colleagues, writing was both a luxury and an inner hunger.

However, this is not a simple case of resentment and anger about household and family duties; women authors such as Tanner also seem to

have felt guilt and worry that their literary pursuits were encroaching on these same household activities. Tanner clearly felt divided and conflicted over how to split her time, energies, and loyalties. In the same memoirs described above, for instance, she felt compelled to assure the reader that: "I did not, however relax my care for the comfort of my home, nor my vigilance in guarding my children from the paths of evil."[64] She did not, she argued, neglect her most important and paramount duty as a woman—that of motherhood—and she wanted all to know so that they would not worry that the poetry had resulted in the neglect of her household or children. Interestingly, Tanner's obituary, published in the *Woman's Exponent* upon her death in 1890, took up this same theme as it assured mourners that she was not simply a well-known writer: "Mrs. Tanner was talented in many other ways besides possessing the precious gift of poesy—she was practical and executive in all the affairs and transactions of life."[65] Tanner felt great pressure to spend the lion share of her time and energy tending to her homes and children, and, as evidenced by her obituary, she was supported by many of her women contemporaries in this kind of prioritizing.

There is a visible conflict and pull, then, for many of these LDS women authors and poets between the home and community duties which they felt were their God-given and religious occupations (which many also felt were personally fulfilling and satisfying), and what they felt to be a God-given literary talent. For them it was just as much a problem to ignore this God-given talent, as it was to neglect their God-ordained duties. The most common answer to this inner conflict seems to have been that writers created shorter works that were brought together with the shorter works of other women, as in the *Woman's Exponent* or *The Relief Society Magazine,* the *Exponent's* successor. Alternatively, women writers also brought their own works together into larger compilations, as in Tanner's *A Book of Fugitive Poems,* or Crocheron's *Wild Flowers of Deseret*.

The authors of the more private diaries and journals followed this same pattern of accumulated authorship, but they were also part of a different and more ingrained LDS practice of keeping and preserving historical records. Joseph Smith as the founder of Mormonism provided a prime and, for later generations, primordial example of personal and institutional record keeping. Joseph Smith kept journals recording the history of the church (now published as *The History of the Church*), and Lucy Smith, his mother, wrote a biography of the life of Joseph Smith and his family. On an even more profound level, the founding act of the LDS Church is considered to be Smith's discovery and translation of The Book of Mormon, the historical and familial records of a number of besieged and besieging cultural communities in the early Americas. The keystone of the LDS scriptural tradition was and continues to be the

records of religious patriarchs written, not only as history, but also as moral, religious, and ethical lessons for posterity. When they added entries into their diaries, LDS men and women were simply recapitulating on a small scale what Nephi, all the other Book of Mormon patriarchs, as well as Joseph Smith recorded on a grander and more sweeping scale.

LDS men had more direct pressure to follow this tradition represented in the Book of Mormon in order to establish their own family tradition with themselves as a recording patriarch, or one within a line of recording patriarchs. However, women's personal writings also derive from this tradition and motivation. Fewer women wrote and those who did, wrote less than their fathers, husbands, and brothers, yet most appear to have written with the conviction that their lives were important to posterity. The women who wrote felt deeply that their stories were key parts of the LDS landscape of daily and vital events and that it was their responsibility to record their contributions to this landscape, especially for their children's sake. Martha Cragun Cox, who, at the end of her life, wrote an autobiography describing her experiences as a plural wife in frontier southern Utah and Nevada, enunciates the motivating force behind many of the personal writings of LDS women. She titled her work: "Biographical Records of Martha Cox. Written for my children and my children's children, and all who may care to read it."[66] In the opening passage she further explores this theme of moral continuity and teaching as she contemplates her enterprise: "There are few lives so uneventful that a true record of them would not be of some worth—in which there are no happenings that can serve as guide or warning to those that follow. It is to be hoped that in the pages that follow there will be somethings found that may be taken as good lessons to those who read."[67] In a similar vein, Ansine Peterson, an immigrant from Denmark, informs the reader at the beginning of her journal: "It has long been my desire to write a short history of my life, but lacking data I have refrained, thinking it would be of but little valu, however considering that maybe even a small sketch might be of some good, I will try to write some little hoping some one will be benefitted thereby."[68] Both of these women felt that their lives, or the lives of any of the faithful, for that matter, were inherently interesting and salutary for a reader striving for the highest salvation. Each had something important and enlightening to demonstrate. Each author added something to a rapidly accumulating store of spiritual knowledge.

As with the public periodic and monographic literature, the diaries, journals, and, to a lesser extent, the autobiographies and biographies of LDS women are accumulations of units of composition rather than extended works. While some of the diaries and journals are quite substantial in

length, the daily entries are usually short, only a sentence or two, or oftentimes entirely absent. This literature is not the product of sustained attention over a relatively short amount of time. Rather, the continued accretion of short daily, weekly, monthly, or even less frequent entries over years, decades, or a woman's entire adult life, created the length and breadth of these personal writings. The natural, albeit filtered, unfolding of a person's life gives the energy and the interest to the private writings.

In whatever circumstance and for whatever purposes that LDS women recorded their lives in journals, diaries, autobiographies, and oral histories, most writers expected and on some level wanted their work to be read by an audience. Even these private materials are not usually the spontaneous outpourings of the soul, as is often assumed today about the genre of diary and journal writing. Many of these personal histories are written with a keen eye and understanding of the reader's sympathies or anxieties. Many of these works, even diaries, show internal evidence of having been copied over and/ or edited at a date later than the original writing, and that editing or adjusting usually appears to have been done by the original author.

In other words, these women were self-conscious authors and advocates for themselves and other women, and they knew how to most effectively and positively present themselves and their lives to family, friends, and community. As products of, or converts to a highly literate community with an embedded tradition of record keeping and record reading, we should not be surprised that even the seemingly least educated authors of personal writings were canny presenters of their stories. In describing the diaries and autobiographical sketch of Eliza R. Snow, the most prominent of early LDS women diarists, poets, and leaders, scholar Maureen Ursenbach Beecher notes: "Personal texts thus are the fictions we create in order to make our lives acceptable to ourselves and our imagined readers."[69] This is not to say that women lied or deceived their would-be reader, it is simply to point out that the authors wrote these personal and public documents with a realization that they would eventually have an audience, and the authors wanted to have a firm control over how that audience would understand and receive the work.

It is also not to say that these works are unrevealing because of their self-consciousness. Musing about LDS women's writings, Beecher observes: "Within every text, I believe, is embedded a deeper truth, a reality the researcher may try to reconstruct."[70] Each work is a posed and incomplete snapshot of a woman's life, or, to use Beecher's analogy, each work is a quilt, embroidery, tapestry, or fabric in varied states of completion and incompletion.[71] But each work is also a deeply revealing glance into an

individual's life and when one glances into a number of these lives through this literature and imagery, the glances become a gaze into the symbolic, literary, and theological lives of the women of the LDS community. Each glance creates a fuller, livelier, and, ideally, more authentic portrait. And though it is ultimately only a portrait that remains flat and lifeless, it is one that can be used to understand more fully the vibrant, rich, and communal symbolic and religious lives of LDS women.

Both the private and public literary works of LDS women are a result of an accretion or building up of women's lives and thoughts. This slow and sustained process creates a surprisingly coherent picture. Behind both types of literature is a strong and congruent vision of what the present life should be like, how it should be lived, as well as an understanding of the promise of an eternally happy future life. This coordinated vision is the driving force and the glue that holds together these glimpses of women's lives and thoughts.

However, we should think of this meta-coherence produced by the theological use of nature and flower imagery as being complex, flexible, and able to encompass a wide range and diversity of opinions. This approach will help to combat the tendency of outsiders to view the Mormon community as monolithic and homogenous. Certainly, the LDS community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries viewed themselves as a people, as almost a distinct ethnicity or race.[72] Much has already been written on this phenomenon by contemporary observers and modern-day historians. There is no question that the LDS community presented a united front to American society. In return, the mainstream press, as well as non-Mormon individuals viewed Utah-based Mormons as a foreign, far-away people.[73] But within the church there was and remains a wide diversity of opinions and beliefs stemming from the large number of cultures and regions represented within the community.[74]

One important example of this complexity and diversity is the inevitable divide between the elite producers and directors of LDS women's culture and literature, and those women outside of this circle of leadership. As represented by the periodicals the *Woman's Exponent* and *The Relief Society Magazine,* the public writings of LDS women were either written or edited largely by members of the central leadership of the Relief Society. Though these leaders ranged far and wide throughout LDS territory and often spent extended time away from headquarters and Relief Society duties, their home base of Relief Society operations was in Salt Lake City, close to the center of general church leadership and administration. As noted by Beecher, these women were usually members of an urban, northern Utah, elite: products and producers of a culture which was occasionally

in a somewhat tension-filled relationship with the rougher, less superficially sophisticated culture of frontier southern and non-Utah LDS settlements and culture clusters in, for instance, Mexico, Canada, or the Islands of the South Pacific.[75] Even today this tension remains and is perhaps even more obvious with the high concentration of non-Mormons in the Salt Lake Valley as compared with the almost solidly Mormon, conservative population in other parts of Utah.

For the most part, the local level of leadership and membership had a great deal of respect for the centralized hierarchy of the Relief Society, and supported the vision and policies of that hierarchy. But they also had an underlying, or intermittent feeling of resentment for the seeming presumption on the part of this privileged leadership and, more generally, for the perceived advantages, education, and snobbery of women from Salt Lake City. Such resentment and tension is a small, but persistent theme throughout the writings of LDS women. Martha Cragun Cox, for instance, describes in her autobiography how as a young girl in St. George, Utah, she was dismissed from her Sunday School teaching position so that it could be filled by a fancily-dressed lady from Salt Lake City.[76] We will most likely never know whether or not there were other extenuating circumstances that led to Cox's dismissal. For Cox, though, it was only the outward appearance of this city dweller that swayed the opinion of the local church leadership. This woman's appearance was deceptive and this deceptiveness was rooted in her origination from Salt Lake City. In the description of the incident, the criticism so often directed by Mormons at the vanity and shallowness of the outside world became directed at the urban, northern section of Utah as a threatening cause of disruption and deception.

Because women outside of the Salt Lake sphere of culture sometimes felt that the northern, urban areas of Utah were more permissive environments than their own, they resented when the Salt Lake Relief Society leadership encouraged and chided them to live a harder, more restricted and puritanical life. They resented the seeming do-as-I-say-and-not-as-I-do philosophy. This tension was especially apparent during the early years when the frontier areas were still in the process of being settled—where life was, at best, rough and tumble. Prominent LDS historian Juanita Brooks, in her autobiography of growing up in southern Utah, quotes her Grandma Mary's story about the visit of some of Brigham Young's wives to the region.

> "They came down to establish the Retrenchment Society. They told us how it was the wish of the President that we should do away with all our extravagances in dress and habits. I looked around at the women in the audience. We were all in homespun, coarse and faded-looking

> because we hadn't learned yet how to set the indigo. And the speaker wore a silk dress with wide bands of velvet ribbon and lace edging. I sat there and listened as long as I could stand it, and then I said, 'Which do you want us to retrench from, Sister Young, the bread or the molasses?'"[77]

Reflecting on this incident, Brooks thinks of its ramifications and relevance to her own lifetime and concludes that it was representative of an attitude common to those living in the dry desert of southern Utah (often called "Dixie" by contemporary Mormons). She writes: "Much as we loved and respected our leaders, it was easy to see that many of our folk were a little jealous or resentful of the fact that the people of the north lived so much better than we and at less effort."[78] These people, living in such difficult circumstances often at the urging of the northern leaders, who were intent on spreading settlements as quickly as possible, resented being dictated to by those who lived in relative comfort and who had little knowledge of how hard it was to eke out a living in "Dixie."

This is not to say that the foundation of the relationship between central leadership and local, urban and rural, northern and southern LDS communities was conflict and resentment. It is simply to point out that the inevitable tension between leadership and membership of a community had particular environmental and cultural implications in the LDS case. These differences on the environmental and cultural level also played out on the symbolic and literary level and this will sometimes show up in the following discussion. The literature examined is not homogeneous. This was true not only because of the different kinds of literature (public and private) written with varying purposes (to further explain and justify the role and actions of women, or for didactic and descriptive purposes), but because this literature was written from differing environmental and cultural positions. While the foundational assumptions within nature and flower imagery were similar, the conclusions drawn within and by means of nature and flower imagery differed and reflected the diversity of opinion and experiences within the LDS cultural context. This diversity is especially important to keep in mind since much of the following discussion will necessarily focus on the overall similarities and overarching worldview.

In the end, however, also important to keep in mind are Brooks' qualifying thoughts after highlighting the tension between those in northern and southern Utah. She notes:

> And yet the Church was everything to us. It was for the Church that we were all here; it was the Church that had drawn our parents from all

> the far countries. Even the building of the ditch and the dam, the graveling of the sidewalks, the planting of cotton or cane had its inception in the Church, for ours was a temporal gospel as well as a spiritual one.[79]

There was always a large core of LDS members who were determinedly dedicated to their church, community, and leadership and, as will be seen, were willing to make great sacrifices in order to further the success and the solidarity of that community. They saw, in fact, that one of their most basic obligations as church members was to put their lives physically and emotionally at risk for their church and their future eternal lives. For these members who cared enough to express their thoughts and motivations on paper, this was one of the central understandings, was perhaps the most important foundational supports of the LDS system of beliefs and practices. It overrode any internal conflicts and fissures within the community. LDS men and women continually expressed this understanding in talks, writings, and thoughts. Significantly, flower and nature symbolism was often used as a vehicle for expressing and adulating this view. Nature and flower imagery, thus, expresses and unfolds the paradox of conflict and diversity of opinion within a framework of homogenous and overarching vision. The theological use of flower and nature imagery reflects the reality of the externally unified and internally diverse LDS community.

Chapter Two

The Adoption and Adaptation of Nature and Flower Imagery by Mormon Women Writers: The Theological and Institutional Context

In order to more fully understand the religious meaning of nature and flower imagery within the literature of LDS women, we must ask: Why and how did a supplemental, popular, literary, symbolic theology emerge within this community and during this time period? The series of answers to this question will provide a needed gaze into the circumstances of the contemporary LDS community, and provide fertile ground from which to examine in more depth how this imagery was used to theological purpose.

The theological and institutional structures within the Mormon community provide a context for answering this question. Two main factors should be highlighted. First, one of the tension-filled questions within the LDS faith was: How did women fit theologically within the overarching plan of salvation? Church pronouncements were contradictory on this point. Further, within the LDS progressive, optimistic plan of salvation, just below the surface, the figure of Eve, the implicit figure of the Mother in Heaven, and the more general idea of motherhood, placed women and femaleness within the church's theological structure, in a positive, even salvific light. However, because the community was based on the patriarchal model of the Old Testament, relatively less attention was paid to women and femaleness than to men and maleness within theological statements and musings. A tension, then, existed within the theological logic of the community.

Secondly, following directly from this point, rather than having a set, established theological structure and canon, the Mormon community was in flux and still largely based on revelations from authoritative figures. Basic beliefs were in place, but, only during this period, were the beliefs and practices being examined, systematized, and made available on a mass scale. Compared with other major faith traditions in America, even today the church has little formalized theological discourse and scholarship. Beliefs and practices are recorded and passed down through scripture, publications, and through local and general authorities of the church. This was even more the case in the first decades of the group's existence. Every religious community has gaps in the coverage and logic of their theology, but the early LDS community was especially open to supplemental, additional theologies because of the inevitable questions in a young religious faith based on revelation: all areas, all issues could simply not be addressed within the short arc of the group's history. The implicitly positive interpretation of women's beings and roles was waiting to be enunciated during a time in which the theological flexibility of the community still allowed and even invited this kind of enunciation and innovation to occur.

THE BASICS OF LDS THEOLOGY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURE

The LDS church was founded in New York State in 1830 by Joseph Smith. The most sensational and well-known aspect of the founding was the revelation to Smith by an angel, Moroni, that upon a hidden cache of golden plates, written in "reformed Egyptian," were the histories of a number of Hebraic tribes that had migrated to the Americas in ancient times. Smith translated these plates as the Book of Mormon, and claimed that it was an extension of the Old and New Testaments, but an extension which told of an American and most authentic branch of the Judaic and then Christian faiths. Like many other "new" religions of the early nineteenth centuries such the Shakers or the Millerites, the Mormons aimed at restoring the true, original church in order to bring in the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. As Jan Shipps has pointed out using Mircea Eliade's idea of the myth of the eternal return, Mormons as a community, were looking backward towards an original purity in order to move forward towards the ultimate purity of salvation.[1]

While Smith maintained that he was basing the theology and institutional structure of the LDS church on early Hebraic and Christian models, scholars to this day continue to argue about whether this institution and theology is actually a form of Christianity, or something else altogether.

Perhaps, once again, Shipps has hit the nail on the head when she describes Mormonism as having in some respects the same relationship to Christianity as Christianity has to Judaism.[2] The faith also has a formal, structural kinship with Islam in that the scriptures and early history of the church were so dependent on a new scripture, new revelations, and a charismatic and powerful prophetic figure who claimed to be simply a messenger for God's truth. The questions and issues are complex, but what is clear is that the institutional and theological structures of the new faith were demonstrably different from either the Protestant or Catholic forms of Christianity that dominated the landscape of the early nineteenth-century United States of America.

In the late nineteenth century, details within a carefully spun-out theology may have been missing from LDS cosmology and anthropology, but the basic elements of the Mormon belief system were introduced and developed early. Probably the most distinctive and consequential element of this system was an infinite optimism about human nature that was combined with the concept of progressive salvation. Put simply, humans beings were seen to be literally God's spirit children born into a preexistence to God and his divine consort, the Mother in Heaven, and with the potential, after taking on mortal bodies, to progress to the highest level of godhood in the afterlife.[3] In this view, God had a specific plan of salvation that was put in motion when, in the Garden of Eden, Eve and Adam knowingly introduced sin and suffering into human life.[4] Jesus Christ, also according to the plan, and with free will, then chose to die on the cross so that human beings would be allowed back into their divine Father's presence[5]—if they accepted and understood this plan, and if they then lived by the dictates and laws of God the Father. After corruption and vice and ignorance took over Christianity, the final phase of the plan was instituted when Joseph Smith reintroduced these ancient truths to human beings.[6]

In order to understand how a deliberately patriarchal theological and institutional structure developed from within this system, we must look a little more carefully at its internal logic and explanations. One of the most famous and authoritative statements of these optimistic, progressive beliefs was made by Joseph Smith in what has become known as "The King Follett Discourse," given on April 7, 1844, at the funeral in Nauvoo, Illinois, of a man named King Follett. Expounding on the underlying structure of cosmic salvation, Smith pronounced within the sermon: "I am going to tell you the designs of God for the human race, the relation the human family sustains with God, and why He interferes with the affairs of man."[7] There is some scholarly dispute about the details of Smith's speech since it was an extemporaneous talk and recorded somewhat differently by various listeners, but

the basic outlines of the discourse remain and are generally agreed upon. As opposed to how many forms of Christianity viewed the divine, most fundamentally, Smith made clear that God was no spirit, but a literal and physical glorified divine being in human form:

> First, God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret! If the veil were rent today and the great God that holds this world in its sphere and the planets in their orbit and who upholds all things by His power—if you were to see Him today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, like yourselves.[8]

In other words, God was immortal and all-powerful, but also, and paradoxically, spiritually material. There was nothing metaphorical about the nomenclature, God the Father. He was the spiritual and physical father of all of humanity as Smith emphasized when he described the relationship between Adam and God: "For Adam was a man formed in His likeness and created in the very fashion and image of God. Adam received instruction, walked, talked, and conversed with Him as one man talks and communicates with another."[9]

From this assertion came two, closely related assumptions: God was once a man[10] and, therefore, probably most provocative, as his children, all men could follow in the footsteps of their father and potentially become Gods themselves. The entire world, the entire universe was in a state of constant and steady progression towards perfection and human beings were an integral part of this movement towards divinity. Smith challenged his listeners: "You have got to learn how to make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves and be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done . . . till you are able to sit in everlasting burnings and everlasting power and glory as those who have gone before, sit enthroned."[11] Thus, the bar for the highest salvation was set immeasurably higher than the greatest hope offered to the faithful in more traditional forms of Christianity. Godhood and the entrance into a pantheon of gods was a possibility, was even the ultimate goal for faithful Mormons.

In 1894, in an address to a non-Mormon audience of women, prominent LDS women's leader and spokeswoman, Sarah M. Kimball, explained this deification process in more detail as an a gradual acquisition of knowledge about the intricacies and laws of nature and the universe. For Kimball, the human race as a whole, but also, ideally, all individual were advancing forward and gaining more divine power as they acquired more knowledge. Kimball described the process in this way:

> They that knock with study and faith's assurance, have the narrow way opened to them, and . . . reach the school of the Gods, where they learn the processes by which worlds are organized, by the combining of eternal, intelligent, obedient elements: the uses for which worlds are called into existence; the manner in which they are controlled, and the laws of progression by which all beings and animate things are perfected, and glorified in their respective spheres.[12]

Life and the afterlife were simply schools, or a series of tests which the faithful had to undergo in order to gain more knowledge. In the end, the ultimate goal for each faithful man was to use this knowledge gained to begin the entire process of salvation on another world. As children of God the Father, human beings held within themselves the infinite potential to become powerful, divine, creative beings if only they were able to continually expand their universe of understanding.

Smith not only verbally explained this progressive, expansive, and optimistic view of the universe and of humankind, he also very clearly spelled it out in the institutional and social structures of LDS society. Here in the lived, institutional structure of the community, the patriarchal, restorationist trend of the group combined inextricably with this optimistic, progressive, theological stance.

According to Smith, he had received the two levels of what he termed the priesthood, Aaronic and Melchisedek, through visitations by Peter, James, and John, and then Jesus Christ.[13] In the abstract, the priesthood was God's power that existed before time and, throughout history, had been transferred to various faithful Jewish and Christian communities.[14] According to the Mormon scriptures, God took away the priesthood from individuals and communities when they failed to live by God's laws.[15] Therefore, a key part of the restoration of God's kingdom for Joseph Smith and his followers was that the two orders of priesthood were restored to God's new chosen people in order that both the spiritual and temporal affairs of this people could be put straight before the second coming of Jesus Christ.[16]

In more concrete terms, members of the priesthood were thought to be God's representatives and conduits on earth because they carried within themselves this primordial, divine power. After the priesthood powers were transferred to Smith through the laying on of hands by the various scriptural figures, he then went about inducting faithful male members into the priesthood through a similar, direct transfer of apostolic power. As time went on, teenagers would receive the lower order of the priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood, while older men or men who were sent out on some

kind of mission for the church would receive the higher order and would, at that time, be able to exercise the full powers of the office.[17] In other words, the priesthood became the foundation of the institutional structures of the LDS church.

The priesthood offices within the church were absolutely vital in the plan of salvation because members of the priesthood acted as ministers and leaders of the church when they performed the various religious rituals, or ordinances, that human beings had to experience in their progressive march through mortal existence. Like Catholics, Mormons held to the belief that God's power was passed physically through humans and through certain rituals performed by properly authorized persons. Like Protestants, Mormons adhered to a modified version of the priesthood of all believers in the idea that potentially all men could both receive God's power through a laying-on of hands and then wield the authority to perform the necessary salvational ordinances.

For Mormons, therefore, human beings not only had to receive and accept an internal and spiritual understanding of the true structure of the universe as this was delivered by the Holy Spirit in the conversion experience, they also had to have this understanding confirmed and authenticated through a properly authorized representative of Jesus Christ. To start their journey to salvation, they had to undergo the first Mormon ordinance, they had to be baptized by a member of the priesthood.[18] In the Follett discourse, Smith explained: "The baptism of water with the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it is necessary and inseparably connected. He must be born of water and the Spirit in order to get into the kingdom of God."[19] Only members of the priesthood were able to transfer the spirit and understanding of God to those who were being baptized.

The optimism about human nature extended, then, to the actual practices and structures of the church: all men could be saved and all men could potentially play key roles in saving others. When men attained to priesthood positions of authority—often in conjunction with a mission assignment—they passed through a kind of initiation into the upper echelons of church and, therefore, also social leadership. By baptizing others into the church, men were able to exercise the most fundamental power and initiate the first step in the process of salvation through eternal progression because, as Smith noted, only those who received both the water and the spirit of baptism could attain to a happier life in the hereafter. Joseph Smith talked about the eternal consequences of rituals performed by the priesthood, and most who participated in them believed that those eternal consequences were real, efficacious, and awesome.

However, baptism by a member of the priesthood in good standing did not lead directly and automatically to the eventual coronation of godhood. This was only the first step on a long trail with many trials and many alternative turnoffs along the road of life. A vital part of mortal existence was to meet and overcome these tests of faith. In the afterlife, Smith and subsequent leaders posited three different levels of existence for those who were able to meet these challenges with varying levels of success: celestial for those who reached the greatest glory of godhood, terrestrial for those who did not quite make the grade but could serve those who did, and telestial for those still in ignorance.[20] Hell was not emphasized so much, but did exist for those who committed unpardonable sins such as murder, or the rejection of the true faith after receiving the Holy Ghost.[21] Even after baptism, therefore, much was required of the believer if he or she wanted to enter the final and celestial glory. Smith's optimism about human nature placed great weight and responsibility on the individual to develop themselves and their divine potential.

For both men and women to stay on the correct path, to attain the highest level of celestial existence, they had to imitate the actions of God in heaven and create a mortal kingdom on earth—they had to create a family. Creating a human family not only allowed humans to recapitulate God's heavenly actions, it also created the human bodies waiting for those innumerable spirit children to enter. In 1893, prominent member of the priesthood and frequent contributor to the *Exponent,* S. W. Richards, succinctly explained this concept of family as the foundation of all worlds and as a vehicle to salvation:

> It is in these relations the soul of man finds its powers of development. Its loves, it sympathies, its tenderest emotions, passion subdued and the natural man putting on the divinity of Gods; all are found deeply rooted and flourishing in their growth, where family ties bind soul to soul and two are one.[22]

Human beings took the first step towards divinity, and even entered into a kind of communion with God when they imitated his heavenly, creative actions, but upon the earth and in miniature within their own families. This reduplication of God's actions was absolutely crucial for the internal, spiritual development of human beings. It was here that the progressive knowledge of the divine described above by Kimball was sparked and then nurtured. For the LDS community, the power of creation in the mortal realm, was (and is) one of the most important schools of development in the scheme of salvation.[23] Mortal families were the bases on which eternal,

divine kingdoms were built. It is hard to emphasize enough the central and salvific meaning of the family within Mormonism.

Key to this first school of mortality and the successful creation of the family was that the bond between a man and a woman, between parents and children be "sealed," or overseen by a properly authorized member of the priesthood.[24] All family relationships, including those between people long dead had to be so authorized.[25] The idea was to link families together all the way back to the time of Adam and Eve. By creating this divine and spiritual bond—a kind of God-endorsed network extending to the first mortal parents—humans would bring all humanity, living and dead, into the fold of salvation, and all would come face-to-face with their divine roots.

As a crucial part of this process, these sealing rituals were ideally to take place in a temple, a building specifically dedicated to the performance of private, ostensibly secret religious rituals. Like baptism, temple rituals were crucial to eventual salvation. Writing on the importance of these rituals, scholar Carol Cornwall Madsen notes: "As meritorious as this life pattern might be [to develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ and live a virtuous lives], it alone could not assure them a place in the celestial kingdom, the dwelling place of the Father. However, accompanied by the saving ordinances of the gospel, it promised a meaningful life here and eternal life hereafter."[26] Numerous rituals were performed in the temple, but probably the most important and the most numerous were present and posthumous baptisms, endowments, and sealings—all ordinances performed by members of the priesthood. Endowment ceremonies were rituals in which the structure and plan of salvation were acted out before the participants in a kind of sacred theater. As Madsen notes, these Endowment ceremonies gave men and women the knowledge necessary in order to get back into God's presence.[27] Often performed in conjunction with endowments, sealings were usually marriages performed in the temple and always by a properly authorized member of the priesthood. In order for a man and woman to continue living in the afterlife as a divine, creative pair, the priesthood power had to seal them irrevocably; otherwise, the marriage would simply dissolve upon the death of one or the other. Eternally sealed marriages had eternal consequences and, as with baptism, the lay, patriarchal priesthood initiated and negotiated these consequences.

While the rituals performed in the temple were of ultimate importance to LDS men and women, most of LDS social and religious life centered on the local and church-wide community which, in turn, was centered around a core of local and church-wide religious leaders. As with the temple rituals, the power and authority of the priesthood structured

the religious and social institutions of the community. The organization of the church was a three-tiered pyramid, with the structure at the top being recapitulated throughout the lower levels. The most important leader of the church was the prophet/president who selected a first and second counselor to become members of a triumvirate presidency. This presidency received and communicated revelations on matters relevant to the entire church. Headed by a similar presidential triad, at the next level of organization, stakes, in turn, were made up of a number of wards, comparable to parishes, that were headed by a local bishop and his two counselors. At each of these more local levels of institutional structure, the priesthood leadership ideally acted as conduits for receiving God's will on local matters from the mundane to the more abstract.

In the pages describing the private, day-to-day lives of women and men, the ward bishops stand out as the most prominent and influential leaders for the LDS people. The priesthood power of the bishops was paramount to the spiritual and social cohesiveness of their communities. Bishops, for instance, were in charge of running the weekly church meetings and appointing men and women to lead the various ward auxiliaries of the church: the Relief Society, the Primary Association (for young children), the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Society, the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, and the Sunday School. Bishops also were in charge of the general emotional and physical well-being of their flock. They were viewed as fathers and guardians of their respective wards. On a small scale, they stood in the position of the general president and prophet of the church who, in turn, stood as an earthly representative of (perhaps even symbolic representation of) God the Father, the divine creator and guardian of the entire process of birth and salvation. God the Father, like presidents and bishops, had the help of two assistants or "counselors," Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost.

On both the theological, institutional, and social levels Mormonism was and continues to be a deliberately patriarchal faith dedicated to promoting a theological and social order centered on ascending levels of male-centered leadership modeled on the Old Testament patriarchal figures. This leadership started with the father in the home, moved to the bishop of the ward, the stake president, the prophet of the church and ended with God the Father. This patriarchal structure is highlighted in countless sources by both men and women. Annie Clark Tanner, who wrote an autobiography about her experiences as a daughter and then wife within polygamous families, lived well into the twentieth century to see the marked changes that took place within the LDS church after the demise of polygamy. She notes that the foundation of this shift occurred when the church moved from an

older model of life based on the Old Testament patriarchal system to a twentieth-century context in which the New Testament became paramount and patriarchal structures became somewhat less emphasized.[28] On a similar note, Elizabeth Kane a sympathetic but critical friend of the LDS community who, in 1873, spent a few months with Brigham Young in southern Utah as an honored guest, felt transported back to the world of the Old Testament. She recorded the deference that LDS women showed to men,[29] the, to her, unusual number of men who attended weekly meeting,[30] and the overall ambiance of ancient, patriarchal times: "During my whole stay in Utah, I have found the poetry of the Bible running in my mind. I have felt myself to be living in that old Syrian world amid a people whose ways are like those of the ancient pastoral folk to whom Isaiah spoke."[31] Echoing this Old Testament patriarchal focus, the Book of Mormon centers almost exclusively on the male prophets and leaders of the people. In the *Exponent,* in an article about women in the Book of Mormon, the author points out that in the entire series of histories only two women are mentioned by name, Abesh [now often spelled Abish] and Isabel [there is one other, Sariah], and Isabel is described as being a harlot.[32] "It is somewhat noticeable how little prominence is given to womankind in the historical narrative of the Book of Mormon, and unfortunately when mention is made of her it too frequently grows out of man's sins and her misfortunes."[33] Even in comparison with the Old and New Testaments, women as identifiable, individualized characters are noticeably invisible in the world of the Book of Mormon. Spurred on by Joseph Smith's original quest to re-institute the original and true church, LDS leaders deliberately modeled the community, both socially and institutionally, on their nineteenth century interpretations of the biblical, patriarchal structures.

The power of the priesthood, therefore, while radically lay in the sense that it was extended to all faithful men of the church, was also only extended to the men of the church. A key part of Smith's restoration was the renovation of social ills through establishing correct relations between men and women, especially within the family. When Smith and then his successor, Brigham Young, introduced polygamy into the community, many reasons were given—including that it was part of the restoration of the ancient order of religion and society.[34] The social aim of restoring men's good character by renovating the relation between the sexes was also a key part of the argument.[35] Kathryn Daynes notes that LDS members carried with them and retained in Utah the assumption that men should be the patriarchal authority within the household, whereas, after the 1850s, in wider American society, there was increasing emphasis on women as the maternal and spiritual centers of the home.[36] For Smith and later LDS

leaders, renovation of the character and responsibility of men was the key to reducing social and familial troubles.[37] Smith was aiming to restore the power and respect of the father at all levels of the social and familial structure.

This prioritizing and strengthening of traditional gendered roles appears to have created an inevitable imbalance in how men and women were viewed within the community. Annie Clark Tanner, for instance, writes that because men only were allowed to attain the priesthood and because they were also able to take multiple wives, women were sometimes considered to be inherently inferior to men within the LDS community. She notes: "The Priesthood is a spiritual power which purports to give man superior wisdom."[38] This comment is supported by the admonition to women within Relief Society meetings that women must unquestioningly obey their male, priesthood leaders. Relief Society president Zina D. H. Young was always especially careful to exhort Relief Society members to be very cautious and respectful towards all representatives of the priesthood. Speaking in Salt Lake at a monthly meeting for women, Young took up the subject of obedience, especially obedience towards the priesthood: "No one on earth respects a woman more than the Holy Priesthood do, but let us be careful that we do not take privileges unto ourselves that do not belong to us. I have been so careful in this, never to touch what did not belong to me any more than I would handle fire."[39]

The basic theology, beliefs, and practices of the LDS church were self-consciously patriarchal. Women were expected to take a less prominent role at every step on the path to salvation. But what is not so clear and what needs to be now highlighted is that this distinctive, restorationist, literal LDS theology also held within it an abiding tension over the interpretation of femaleness and the role of women within the plan of salvation and the institutional church. Not far beneath the surface of this straightforward and seemingly thoroughgoing patriarchal system were social and theological trends that accorded women and femaleness great power and respect.

THEOLOGICAL TENSION: FEMALE-FOCUSED ELEMENTS OF LDS THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

A Patriarchal Blessing given to Jane Kartchner Morris in 1917 gets to the heart of this tension. Patriarchal Blessings were prophetic blessings given to LDS members by an older, respected man of the community who had been ordained into the church office of Patriarch. These blessings were written down and provided both guidance and encouragement to members

as they faced the inevitable obstacles of life. In this particular blessing recorded in her diary, wife and mother Jane Kartchner Morris received the promise of the highest eternal existence possible for a woman to achieve: "You shall come forth in the morning of the first resurrection and shall be crowned with glory and immortality and with Eternal life, to reign as a queen and a priestess in the mansion that is prepared for you, unto the glory of the most high in connection with your husband in the Celestial Kingdom of our God."[40] Men were to be fatherly priests to the LDS community in order to attain the heights of godhood, and, ideally, women were to be obedient and nurturing wives and mothers in order to be able to stand at the sides of their exalted husbands for all eternity.

We should note here another, less obvious logic within this Patriarchal Blessing. While women could only reach the highest positions of divine queens and priestesses in association with their husbands, men could only step into the creative, commanding role of their Father in Heaven by being properly sealed to one or more wives. Men were repeatedly admonished that they could not reach this position without becoming a husband and father, without the help of women. The conclusions were complicated and contradictory: men were to be preeminent in the home and in the heavenly world, but there was also a strong argument that marriage was to be an institution in which each member played gendered, but crucial roles.[41] The revelation on plural marriage delivered to trusted insiders by Joseph Smith in 1843 emphasizes a number of times the central place of this marital pairing.

> I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of the priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths. . . .[42]

Madsen argues that, with this revelation and especially with the institution of temple ceremonies in the 1840s, Joseph Smith felt that he was bringing about the final and fullest restoration of the priesthood authority to earth.[43] Women and the bond of marriage were key elements in this restoration. Madsen suggests that Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society in 1842 as he was introducing the temple ceremonies of sealings and endowments in order to teach women the meaning of the temple ceremonies and their crucial roles in participating in these ceremonies and,

thus, in bringing in the full restoration of the priesthood.[44] This purpose is evident in the fact that women performed (and still perform) many of the key parts of the temple ceremonies—washing and anointing other women during endowments, for instance—and, in these early days, were often called "priestesses" for their work.[45]

One of the inner circle of elite women who participated in the early Relief Society and temple ceremonies was Eliza R. Snow, a plural wife of Joseph Smith and, upon his death, plural wife of second church president, Brigham Young. As Jill Derr notes, Snow was perhaps the most important leader of women in the early LDS church.[46] Using this vast influence and taking the lessons she had learned from Joseph Smith about the early Relief Society and temple ordinances, Snow encouraged women in the practical charity work of the Relief Society. Like Kartchner's Patriarchal Blessing she also assured them that they would reach the highest exaltation in the afterlife: "You, my sisters, if you are faithful will become Queen of Queens, and Priestesses unto the Most High God."[47]

A couple points should be emphasized here. First, there was a strain within Mormon theology that could be interpreted, though it often was not, as giving women equal status in the plan of salvation. Second, we also see a related strain within the early Mormon tradition of strong women leaders who influenced how Mormon theology was understood by the women, and often the men of the church. LDS women writers had varied models for seeing women as being theologically and institutionally important.

This tension within Mormon theology was complicated by a number of other factors. Within this patriarchal system of religion and society, another, more mainstream current combined with the restorationist philosophy of Smith and his followers. So popular in the Victorian era at large, this "separate spheres" worldview held that women were the inherently more spiritual and religious beings who should be lifted up and given more authority to renovate the character of men and society at large. This strain of thought shows up repeatedly within the work of LDS women—indeed it serves as a steady undercurrent throughout the literature. Even male leaders, such as S.W. Richards, took up the theme with fervor:

> [H]er keen appreciation and discernment of both the right, and the wrongs of life; are but exhibitions of her nature which is ever tending to the development of the divine; and which indicates her true relationship to that divinity of which man so often proves himself a stranger, that it may well be said, without her, "man is not in the Lord;" neither can he become legitimately a lord over and in the midst of intelligent beings.[48]

Against the patriarchal downplaying of women and women's role, this stream of thought argued for a necessary mutuality between men and women as they made their way towards the goal of salvation and godhood.

However, this stream of thought, the very trend that Smith was fighting against when he moved towards a patriarchal society, was used to support and explain the patriarchal system itself. This was especially true in explanations for the practice of polygamy where its advocates openly argued that men were indeed further than women from God and godly living. The solution to this problem for LDS leaders was to allow men to live out their libidinous and baser beings within the confines of the socially and spiritually controlled practice of plural marriage. Only by the double-edged process of giving into and, at the same time, controlling men's urges would society be lifted up and would men take up and remain committed to their God-given responsibilities. Only by giving power, authority, and respect to the spiritually weaker vessel, would society as whole be regenerated and renewed.

In the early twentieth century, Edwin T. Woolley, a bishop and businessman in Ogden, Utah, explained in some detail to a dissenting outsider how this premise underlay the practice of polygamy. Using the blunt phraseology of stock raising, he noted the difference between men and women and explained why women were not allowed to take multiple husbands—something that the outsider, a man named Prescott, could not understand:

> What man having a valuable mare would breed her to Seventeen Stallions, but one Stallion could serve Seventeen mares and results could be very satisfactory. A woman can not be anything else than a woman though of course she may be a depraved specimen. A man can not be a woman he may sink lower in the scale of morality than any dog because even a dog will not have sexual intercourse with a beast of another kind or its own gender but a depraved man will.[49]

Women were praised and exalted in words, while in the practice and within the structure of the community, they were, to this outsider, Prescott, treated in a seemingly unfair and unequal manner. This stream of Victorian thought was an important element within the LDS culture, but, at least provisionally, it could be fitted into the overarching patriarchal structure of the community.

Other tendencies in the LDS plan of salvation, however, could not be so easily assimilated into these structures. Specifically, within the process of salvation, the pivotal roles of the Mother(s) in Heaven and Eve challenged

the strong patriarchal focus of the community and offered mute and usually unexplained contradictions to this focus. According to Smith, God produced all of the spirit children on the spiritual plane in the same manner that children come to be in mortal existence—through the commingling of male and female. Because of this belief, a female divinity was inevitable within the LDS cosmology. Linda Wilcox, as well as John Heeren, Donald B. Lindsey and Mary Lee Mason, all correctly, I think, point to the fact that this belief in a Mother in Heaven developed, not out of radical feminist sensibilities in early Mormonism, but out of the radically literalistic and down-to-earth stance of early and subsequent Mormonism. This is in distinction to Shakers and the Christian Scientists who developed the ideas of dual male-female godheads at least partly in order to more comprehensively represent humanity. Wilcox notes in her examination of the concept: "This development of theology by means of inference and commonsense extension of ordinary earth-life experience continued on into the twentieth century. In fact, it is the primary approach taken by most of those who have made mention of a Mother in Heaven."[50] If God the Father were a literal being who produced in the preexistence literal spirit children, including Jesus Christ, then, logically, that father figure would need a female partner in procreation. The development of this belief in the Mother in Heaven was an outgrowth of the basic nature of Mormon theology and belief, not a self-conscious attempt to create a female divinity for social, religious, or political reasons. In its own way, this was a radical development, but made within the context of an increasingly patriarchal and conservative belief system. Women were crucial to the plan of salvation because, in the afterlife, as queens to their exalted husbands, they would also be mothers of spirit children born to populate another world and continue the progressive process of salvation.

Mormon theology became fuzzy about whether or not there were actually multiple Mothers in Heaven who partnered with God the Father.[51] The church has never produced an official statement clearing this issue one way or the other, though some scholars argue that the church is still polygamous in theology, even as it roundly denounces the earthly practice in a social climate where the once shockingly radical LDS church has stepped into the mainstream of American religious life.[52]

What is clear is that this anthropomorphic pairing (or pairings) created a system in which gender differences were stamped with a quality of eternity and finality. Sociologist O. Kendall White, for instance, argues that Mormonism essentialized the gender distinction by making God the Father and all his priesthood representatives literally male. Similarly, the model of

femaleness and female spiritual power was essentialized in the role of a silent and unseen helpmate and mother. White writes:

> Mormon theology assumes that sexual differentiation is inherent in reality itself. Neither sexual differentiation nor the categories implying it are products of creation. A Father-in-Heaven requires the existence of a Mother-in-Heaven, and the Mormon references to both, though the language is typically masculine, are not metaphorical.[53]

Alternatively, an author designated only as "Aunt Ruth" explains well this LDS belief as she considers the "Woman's Sphere" in a musing essay on the subject: "Each woman possesses a separate and distinct identity that cannot become any part of another identity. This identity is destined to be preserved intact through all the eternities that are to come and has within it the elements of adaptation and fitness to all conditions, both as pertaining to the present as well as to the future."[54] With the accompanying LDS belief that all spirit was simply rarified matter—at the purest, highest end of a wide spectrum that began in heaven and ended on earth—men were male to their very core and center of being, while women were female in essence. Men were fleshly representatives of the Heavenly Father, as women embodied their spiritual mother. Maleness and femaleness were not metaphorical or abstract concepts, but integral and complementary parts of the very creation of the universe, and each played a vital part in the creation and maintenance of the structure of the universe and the plan of salvation.

Even in the early days of Mormonism, however, church leaders rarely described or even mentioned the Mother in Heaven. In 1909, the presidency of the church made an authoritative statement verifying her existence.[55] Confirming that humans were made literally in the image of God, the presidency stated: "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."[56] But beyond this bare confirmation, little came down from the leadership in the way of theological description or exploration of this intriguing, but ever-shadowy figure(s). Rather, she appeared, still sparsely, in a kind of official folk tradition. The Heavenly Mother first appears in the Nauvoo period of the church when, according to Zina D. H. Young, Smith revealed to her the existence of the Mother God as a way of assuaging her deep grief about the death of her own, earthly mother.[57] Like the covert practice of polygamy during this time, the belief seems to have spread from there, and informally, among the inner circle of elite Mormon men and women already bound together by the potentially disastrous secret of plural marriage.

A vital member of this elite, Eliza R. Snow made the most important and well-known statement about this heavenly mother. In 1845, Snow wrote "O, My Father," a poem celebrating the father and mother god pairing, and, set to music, a hymn that would become extraordinarily popular among nineteenth-century LDS members. In this early period of the church and even into the early twentieth century, many men and women leaders and members considered this hymn to rank as a revelation, and Eliza R. Snow, herself, was counted as a prophetess and one who continued on, to a lesser degree, the prophetic tradition of her former husband, Joseph Smith.[58]

The last two verses of Snow's hymn are a clear and concise statement of the LDS conception of heaven and the afterlife.

> I had learned to call Thee Father,
> Through Thy spirit from on high;
> But until the Key of Knowledge
> Was restored I knew not why,
> In the heavens are parents single?
> No; the thought makes reason stare!
> Truth is reason, Truth eternal
> Tells me I've a Mother there.
>
> When I leave this frail existence,
> When I lay this mortal by,
> Father, Mother, may I meet you
> In your courts on high?
> Then at length, when I've completed
> All you sent me forth to do,
> With your mutual approbation
> Let me come and dwell with you.[59]

According to Snow, all those who are faithful and fully understand and live their lives according to the LDS doctrine will find the reward of an eternal family—not just a father god and elder brother, Jesus Christ, but also a divine mother—waiting patiently in the afterlife for their returning offspring and siblings. Anticipating the expected disbelief with a little disdain of its own, the hymn scoffs, if mortal life follows the pattern of heaven, how could it be any other way? With this hymn, Snow confirmed the existence and crucial importance of the Mother in Heaven within the LDS processes of salvation.

Though one might think that the popularity of this revelatory hymn would indicate that members had a great interest in the subject of the heavenly

pair, beyond this revelatory, hymnic statement little appears to have been said about the Mother in Heaven within the public and private literature produced by LDS women. Even when women writers touched on the Mother in Heaven, as White has pointed out, they presented her as a kind of silent partner who mothered her spirit children, sent them off to their mortal existence, and then patiently waited for their return. She was the ultimate comfort and reward for those women and men who conducted their lives well, conscientiously, and devotedly. The poem, "A Thread of Sacred Thought," written for the Relief Society jubilee in 1892 by L. L. Greene Richards contains one of the few mentions of the Mother in Heaven as it sketches this scenario of the departing and returning children.

> We were there with God, our Father,
> And voted, 'Thy will be done,'
> And our Mother, Queen in Heaven,
> Smiled on us every one,
> Smiled on each Eve, each Sarah,
> Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth,
> Elizabeth, Mary and Martha,
> Each daughter that stood for truth.
> . . . . . .
> Well! here we are my sisters,
> In the classes we came to fill;
> Learning out daily lessons,
> Doing our Father's will.
> He will clasp our hands with welcomes,
> When the mystic veil is drawn,
> And as conquerors we enter,
> Where we hailed the First Great Dawn.[60]

The Father plans and dynamically brings to fruition the scheme of salvation, the spirit daughters freely agree to it, and the Mother quietly smiles her approval, but seems to stay wholly outside the discussions. The women set off bravely to carry out their "Father's will," and his welcoming approval in the end is the motivation for these daughters in earthly tabernacles to keep faithful and brave throughout the trials of mortality. After sending her daughters forth on the perilous journey of mortality, the Mother in Heaven drops out of the picture altogether, not even making an appearance in the happy eternal reunion.

While this invisibility of the Mother in Heaven did not openly challenge the power of God the Father, it did confirm that women and femaleness also

had a divine foundation and, thus, even this usually implicit goddess acted as a tension-producing pole within the patriarchal focus of the theology and church. The Mother in Heaven also presented somewhat of a problem to the women of the community, as they found little in the way of guidance and example in this figure and, consequently, had to look to other places, among them nature and flower imagery, for models of female life, behavior, and being. The presence of the Mother(s) in Heaven encouraged women to see in themselves an element of her divinity, but women and men were left on their own to develop cohesive and coherent conceptions of the details of this divinity.

Scripture was one of the more traditional places that LDS women writers found inspiration for understanding the importance and meaning of female life. In the LDS plan of salvation, Eve is one of the most outstanding and powerful female scriptural figures. Eve's and Adam's actions in bringing about the painful, but necessary mortal phase of existence mark her out as a kind of savior figure intimately connected with Jesus Christ within the LDS plan of salvation. In her role as spiritual heroine for humanity, traditionally despised and blamed, Eve became an example for all women to follow and think about and, in this way, even more than the Mother in Heaven, she offered an unanswerable question and conundrum within the patriarchal focus of the community.

In the more traditional Christian interpretation of the Fall, of course, Eve is often blamed for convincing Adam to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, fruit that the couple was strictly forbidden to touch by God. When Adam and Eve ate this fruit, they were pushed out of the garden, Eve was made subject to Adam, and forced to bear children in pain and agony. Sin, evil, suffering, and death were introduced into the world and Eve was blamed for this development.

Carried by faithful converts who still maintained mental and emotional connections with their earlier churches of origin, this negative interpretation of the figure of Eve remained latent in Mormon theology and culture.[61] The more traditional view of the Fall actually quite regularly surfaces within the corpus of Mormon women's poetry and literature. In an article on polygamy reprinted in the *Exponent* from the Primary Association's *The Juvenile Instructor,* the author defends the practice on the grounds that it forces women to become educated and more independent. As the article goes on, however, the argument shifts and suggests that the emotionally difficult practice of polygamy will serve as a kind of compensatory and intensive suffering for LDS women and, thereby, will eventually revoke the curse initiated by the actions of Eve. The author notes that the "effect of their [the plural wives'] examples"

will provide impetus for coming generations of women to improve themselves and that: "nobler types of womanhood will be developed until the penalty laid upon woman in the beginning, that 'thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee,' will be repealed, and she will stand side by side with man, full of that queenly dignity and self control which will make her his suitable companion rather than his inferior."[62] By participating in the practice of plural marriage on a large scale, LDS women would act to reverse and revoke Eve's mistake. This was not one of the major explanations for plural marriage, which tended more toward the social and salvific, but this snippet of an argument demonstrates that traditional, critical understandings of the figure of Eve were present within this community of converts and that these interpretations could be activated at any time and for any purpose.[63]

Most often, however, the figure of Eve was understood in extremely positive terms in relationship to the overall Mormon structure of salvation. So, for instance, Zina D. H. Young remembered that, in a local meeting of LDS women in Lehi, Utah, her husband, Brigham Young, entered the room and, apparently overwhelmed and overjoyed at the sight exclaimed: "What do I see before me? A congregation of Eves."[64] In this comment, he was in no way denigrating the women; rather, he greatly honored those before him by comparing them to their earthly mother, maternal model of creation, and example for women of perseverance through trouble and trials.[65] On a similar upbeat note, "Hermita" notes in an essay that: "I am sure that if we are fortunate enough to meet and associate with our beloved Queen—Mother Eve we will have an esteem and love for her, that words but faintly can express."[66] Eve, in these two views, is an honored, scriptural figure to be respected and emulated by contemporary women.

For the LDS faithful of this period, Eve's role was crucial not only because she introduced actual suffering and evil into the world as necessary testing agents for humanity, but also because she introduced the *knowledge* of good and evil into the world.[67] This knowledge was what allowed humans to make choices about the path they would travel throughout their lives. This knowledge was the first step towards godhood. In order to achieve godhood, humans had to fully understand good and evil and freely chose the virtuous, though difficult path. Discussing suffrage—a topic which often stimulated authors to bring up the figure of Eve—Mary Ann Pratt explains how this works: "In the beginning God gave the law to Adam and Eve. Eve suffered the penalty, and gained the knowledge of good and evil. She became the mother of all living, to act a conspicuous part in the drama of human existence."[68] Similarly, in an 1894 essay, S. W.

Richards argues the LDS position that Eve's fall was essential because she initiated the process whereby humans could become as Gods. He writes: "When in the garden, woman was master of the situation; for a time she held the destiny of a world in her hands, and not until man yielded to her persuasive power did she commit that destiny to the keeping of her lord."[69] Eve used all of her "lovely form and earnest eloquence" pleading with Adam "to share with her the conditions by which, and by which alone, they could become as Gods, knowing both good and evil, and thereby inherit those attributes without which there is no God."[70] For this crucial part that Eve played, Richards assures his presumably largely female audience that: "Woman may well be proud today of the part she acted in the glorious panorama of human existence, she chose her part and played it well, to the end that man might be, and have like knowledge as the Gods."[71] When, on the surface, Eve degraded humanity by introducing suffering into the world, she also, paradoxically, elevated that same humanity by giving all a vital characteristic of divinity—the power of free choice. In this way, Eve became the first savior figure who put the process of salvation in motion, just as Jesus Christ was born to put an end to this same process.[72]

So, an inherent tension remained latent and sometimes apparent in the theological understanding of the community. On the one hand, the church was, in theology and structure, self-consciously patriarchal. God the Father was the motivating and the focal point of salvation. As made up of potentially all male members of the church, the priesthood held the key to all the salvific rituals of the church, while, at the same time, the priesthood stood as patriarchs and father figures for the community, from the ward level to the general level. On the other hand, women were also viewed as necessary players in the plan of salvation. Mormonism had a less prominent female divinity or divinities, by necessity, within its progressive plan of salvation. And, while women were counseled to be obedient to their husbands and priesthood leaders, their roles as mothers modeled on this female divinity were also necessary to salvational progression. The scriptural figure of Eve further balanced out and implicitly challenged the patriarchal focus of the church since she was the one who first instituted the process and plan of salvation. Even within the patriarchal structure of the theology and institution of the church, women and femaleness were crucial within the plan of salvation. However, little was said about women and femaleness within the scriptures and theology of the church. Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that some kind of dialogue would develop about the importance of women within the church.

THE RIGHT TIME AND THE RIGHT PLACE: A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN FLUX

Spurring on this dialogue was the free-floating nature of the community. Within the field of religious studies, ultimately based on the work of Max Weber, it is an oft-repeated and well-known truism that frequently new religious groups are started by a charismatic leader who bases his or her authority on direct communication with a divine figure—a prophet.[73] However, in order for any such religious group to survive beyond this first charismatic leader, beliefs, theology, institutional structures, and, especially, leadership succession must be worked out and systematized so that members know who and what to believe, and so that the group does not descend into a chaos of competing claims and factions.[74] The group must move from being a community based on revelation to a community based on traditional or bureaucratic rules and roles. Any given religious community is constantly fluctuating between the poles of charismatic and traditional authority, but this fluctuation is especially important and noticeable in the early years of a community during the first transition. At the turn of the century, Mormonism was undergoing just such a transition.

Joseph Smith was attempting to institute a patriarchal system of religious rule centered on him as the leader and prophet of the church. However, since this rule derived from charismatic power, he also introduced a dynamic typical of groups based on revelation. On the surface, contradicting the sociological use of the term priest as being based on traditional authority, early on, the Mormon priesthood was radically lay, charismatic, and open to all male members in good standing who had had the apostolic power passed on to them through the laying-on of hands. This lay and charismatic nature of the power of the priesthood introduced a potentially destabilizing element into the growing organization of the church. On a number of occasions, on the claim of charismatic, divine authority, members of the priesthood challenged the standing leadership of the church. Most notably, this occurred after a mob killed Smith and the leadership succession line was unclear. Hyrum Smith, the patriarch of the church, older brother of Joseph Smith, and his designated successor, died along with Smith in the Carthage Jail.[75] Another potential successor, Smith's oldest son, Joseph Smith III, was a mere boy, unready for the taxing job of prophet of a controversial new religious group. At this time, therefore, a number of men, among them Sidney Rigdon and James J. Strang, competed for the top spot of the church, though Brigham Young eventually became prophet of the main branch of the LDS church as he organized and led its members across the plains to Utah.

The foundation of spiritual authority through charismatic claims, also produced a disrupting and destabilizing element within the relation between women and spiritual authority. As Laura L. Vance has pointed out in her discussion of the changing role of women within the Seventh-day Adventist church, groups based on charismatic authority early in their histories often allow women expanded powers and opportunities to participate in the institutional structures of the church.[76] Uncovering this oft-repeated pattern, Vance discovers that Seventh-day Adventist women have steadily lost standing in the institutional and familial structures of the church: young religious groups systematize and these early opportunities open to women usually gradually evaporate. Paradoxically, a socially conservative group such as the Seventh-day Adventists, then, in its millennialist youth actually allowed women a comparatively wide range of opportunities for religious participation and leadership roles.

Just such an expanding and contracting process occurred in respect to the power and position of women within the LDS Church. We can glimpse this process in Smith's organization of the Relief Society in 1842 and then in the subsequent history of the group. On the request of a number of women in the church, Smith created this organization so that women would be able to more effectively distribute their charitable work among the large and quickly growing—and often poor and sickly—population of Nauvoo, Illinois.[77] From the vantage point of the modern outsider, and especially because Smith died only two years after its organization, we have a hard time gauging how Smith envisioned this group in relation to the priesthood leadership of the church. On the one hand, feminist Mormon historians such as Linda King Newell contend that Smith formed the Society as a direct equivalent to the priesthood, as indicated by the fact that, during the organization, he said that he was turning the key of the priesthood over to the group.[78] According to Newell and others, this turn of phrase was then changed by his cousin and church historian, George Smith, when he wrote the official history of the Society in 1854. Joseph Smith now turned the key of priesthood on behalf of the group, indicating that the Society was formed under the direction, rather than invested with the power of the priesthood. During the period we are examining (1880–1920), in the accounts of the organization found in the *Exponent* and *The Relief Society Magazine,* this latter version is universal, always emphasizing the subordinate position of the Relief Society in relation to the priesthood and depicting it as running off the diverted and siphoned authority of the priesthood.

Whatever the relationship of the Relief Society to the priesthood, it is clear that through the nineteenth century, the Society was in many ways

independent of the central leadership of the church: it had its own parallel, female leadership structure, independent finances and property, and it own semi-official publication, the *Exponent*. In the twentieth century, however, as the church systematically began to organize itself for missionary and bureaucratic efficiency and control, the Relief Society gradually became simply another auxiliary of the church so that, in the present day, its leaders have little independent authority, its finances are regulated by the central leadership, and it no longer maintains a separate publication.[79] As in the case of the opportunities for women within the Seventh-day Adventists, an organization begun and based on the charismatic authority of women rather quickly came under the control of an increasingly structured male leadership.

This routinizing process also can be divined in the changes that the charismatic and female-identified practice of speaking in tongues underwent throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[80] As a charismatic practice, speaking in tongues was frequent in the early history of the church, and particularly among LDS women. So, for instance, in the trail diaries of Eliza R. Snow, though the Relief Society itself had been disbanded before the journey across the plains, Snow regularly describes impromptu meetings of women in which tongues and blessings were often exercised and fully enjoyed. In her November 7, 1847, entry, Snow writes: "We found the ground cov. with snow 3 inch. or more—had a delightful meet. of little girls. Susan N. & Martha rec'd the gift of tongues Sarah H. improv'd upon hers which she spoke in yes. here for the first—after meet. sis. Chase blest C. & I & C. spoke in tongues & blest us. Praise the Lord O my soul!"[81]

This practice continued into the twentieth century, though, like the priesthood power, this still nominally charismatic authority of women was standardized—and then eventually cut off from women and men. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, from evidence in the public and private records of women, we can see that the practice was mostly limited to older women who had lived during the first, charismatic epoch of their church's history. This first generation of women, especially Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. H. Young, still held on to this particular charism. Because of this, they were viewed by other, younger women as being closer to the source of revelation and possessing greater spiritual authority. When these older, authoritative women spoke in tongues, for the younger generation this was a special and powerful event. During a jaunt around southern Utah in 1894, Zina D. H. Young spoke in tongues during the meeting of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of Beaver, to the great appreciation and wonder of the girls: "Many were present who

had never before heard the gift exercised, and expressed great joy in being privileged to hear it and to realize the spirit manifestly attending its expression."[82] The strangeness of the practice to the younger generation is emphasized by Juliaetta Bateman Jensen who, at age six (in the mid-1880s), witnessed one of these older women, probably Eliza R. Snow, speak in tongues at a Relief Society conference.

> It had been whispered about that she might speak in tongues, and everyone sat in expectation. It meant something very mysterious to me. When the conference had proceeded to the appropriate place, the visitor arose and began speaking in a peculiar language, with a strange half-singing voice. She walked leisurely down the aisle, pointing to certain women and men, as if she were giving to them a message. When she had finished she walked impressively back to the pulpit, and asked if anyone in the audience had received the interpretation. The air was tense, one could hear the clock tick. No one moved. It seemed that minutes passed.[83]

Juliaetta's mother, Marinda, stood up, presumably to give the interpretation, but, for some reason, was unable to get it out, and the speaker herself finally announced the translation for the listeners.

In these descriptions we can see through the arc of one woman's life, Eliza R. Snow's life, the rise and then subsequent routinization of a charismatic practice. In 1847, women old and young gathered together in joyous groups, spontaneously breaking out into tongues and blessing each other. This was a gift that all could possess and exercise. Forty years later, the same "gift" was retained largely by the powerful and older generation. One of these women, Snow, exercised this gift at the expected time during a highly organized conference of women and only (presumably) she was able to receive the interpretation. All others were frozen (in terror? confusion? awe?) by the now strange and exciting practice.

Yet, in the later transformation of the practice, we also get a sense of the times we are trying in some way to inhabit. Thomas Alexander has explored this transitional period at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, when charismatic authority was being converted into traditional and bureaucratic authority.[84] He notes that the 1890 decision of the church to cease the practice of plural marriage and move more towards the mainstream of American life proved to be the beginning of the modern church with its well-developed leadership and institutional structure. This was a period when the church was settling down, making the necessary internal and external adjustments which

would allow it to survive—through sometimes experimental and unsuccessful projects and approaches—and move toward a more settled framework of belief, practice, and structure.

Mormon women writers adopted and utilized the theology of nature and flower imagery during an intermediate time span when individuals and leaders on various levels of the institutional hierarchy still had access to revelatory communications and explorations of the divine, but when the church, leaders, and members were attempting to bring system and unity to their beliefs and practices. The theological use of flower and nature imagery was one, ultimately unsuccessful, strand of this systematizing process—a strand that sought to fill in the gaps of a patriarchal church in tension with its implicit female elements of divinity and salvation. The time was ripe and ready for this kind of popular, supplemental theological language and imagery. A need was present: women's theological and institutional place within the church was still rather flexible and unexplained. And the opportunity was present: the church was still open to innovation, and leaders and members were seeking for effective ways to explain and systematize their beliefs and practices. The timing, the opportunity, and the need for the imagery, then, can be explained in terms of both general processes of religious development, and the particular characteristics of the LDS community. Women writers seized an opportune time and filled a theological need.

Chapter Three

The Adoption and Adaptation of Nature and Flower Imagery by Mormon Women Writers: The Cultural Context

LDS women's need and opportunity for theological expression are vital for understanding why they adopted and adapted nature and flower imagery. Yet the question still persists: Why did Mormon women writers adopt and adapt nature imagery at this time in order to fill this need and in such a way that it became a tool of theological exposition? For three main reasons, LDS women writers employed nature and flower imagery as a tool of religious exploration.

First, within the larger American culture, nature and flower poetry was an extremely popular genre of popular literature that was both accessible and easily understood and used by even those not so highly educated. Second, within the history and experience of the LDS church, nature developed into an important character within the consciousness of the LDS community as a whole. As the community crossed the plains and then settled in the desert Southwest, they struggled against the forces of nature in order to survive in an unsettled and harsh environment. From these both positive and negative encounters with the reality of nature, nature as a benevolent and nurturing figure came to have great meaning within the literary and theological imagination of the community. Finally, poetry as the revelatory vehicle for this flower and nature imagery, flourished within a community that highly prized direct communication with and from God. This revelatory form was also seen as an especially appropriate form for women. In the content, tone, and mode of expression, nature and flower imagery fit the needs and purposes of LDS women authors who were searching to

explain their place in a community that implicitly interpreted women and femaleness in a positive manner, but explicitly, officially, and in practice was focused on the patriarchal aspects of the church's theology and institution.

A POPULAR LITERARY OPPORTUNITY

In many ways, until the late nineteenth century, men and women members of the LDS church strove to separate themselves from the surrounding American communities, as well as the prevailing mainstream religious and social norms. However, many members and leaders also quietly nurtured those aspects of their former, non-LDS life of which they were especially proud or attached. This was particularly true in the case of seemingly non-religious cultural elements of life: music, dance for recreation, literature, and even the visual arts. After the church had moved to Utah, the elite put a high priority on developing and establishing Mormon, homegrown literature and arts, as well as a school system based on a practical and classical education. The goal was to produce local thinkers and authors. Even in the 1850s in Utah, for instance, men and women of the elite and leadership class met regularly in the context of the Polysophical Society, a group in which current ideas, literature, and philosophy were discussed from a distinctly LDS point of view.[1] At this same time, Deseret University (now the University of Utah) was founded in order to offer men and women an in-state, LDS-oriented higher education. The now famous Mormon Tabernacle choir was touring and giving performances even in the nineteenth century—most notably at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Mormons were poked fun at for their vigorous and enthusiastic dances and balls.[2] A descendant of Brigham Young, Mahonri Young, left Utah to study the visual and theatrical arts. Brigham Young wanted to establish as quickly as possible a fully rounded Mormon culture which selectively took on the educational and artistic trappings of Western, European-American culture.

He delegated responsibility for the development of this culture, at least partly, to influential women within the church. Because of her education and literary attainments, Eliza R. Snow became a symbol of these attempts to develop a Mormon high culture. For the faithful, in many ways she embodied the perfect blend of distinctly LDS piety and fervor combined with an educated background and poetical talents. She was Zion's poetess, as well as Zion's priestess and prophetess; she demonstrated to LDS members that the religious and the cultural could and should stand hand-in-hand.[3]

During the late nineteenth century, Emmeline B. Wells took over the reins of literary leadership from Snow and became the leading woman's

voice in this dual religious-cultural focus. In many ways, Wells directed this young Mormon culture back towards its source in the northeastern United States. Born in western Massachusetts, Wells joined the church as a young teenager. In 1844, at fifteen she married a fellow convert, also fifteen, and moved to Nauvoo in order to be near the prophet, Joseph Smith. Though she married polygamously two more times and underwent great trials, from this time until her death, she dedicated her life to Mormonism as the faith of her choice. But Wells never forgot her childhood in New England and even wrote many poems and essays that recalled the traditions and happy times of antebellum Massachusetts. Because of her pride in her New England ancestry and its historical and literary heritage, Wells desired to maintain selectively connected to certain aspects of her upbringing.

This stance rang true with many educated women who joined the church, sometimes against the wishes of their families, and who sought not only religious and spiritual fulfillment, but also wished to continue their engagement with the literary and artistic movements of wider American culture. Like the contemporary Shakers, these women and men did not hesitate to adopt and adapt new developments to their own use, especially when those developments were practical, technical, or industrial innovations like telegraphy, electricity, etc., or cultural and literary (like the work of authors such as Charles Dickens, Felicia Hemans, Mark Twain). Prominent LDS women writers and leaders such as Wells, Zina D. H. Young, Hannah T. King, and Bathsheba W. Smith, brought the classics of European literature into their new community of faith, but they also read current authors and works. First generation LDS women writers and poets, Wells, Snow, King, Young, Smith, and many others, knew about and enjoyed the genre of spring and flower poetry. And, as is shown by their own work, they were proficient practitioners of this genre who were able to express their opinions on a whole range of practical and spiritual issues through it. Flower and nature imagery was one option available to them when they desired to express themselves, when they sought to describe the lives of women within the church.

Certainly, LDS women writers and leaders had ready knowledge of "spring poetry" and the "language of flowers" imagery. However, we must take the next step and ask why it became such a popular and effective literary and theological tool of discourse. Within the poetry and literature of LDS women writers, for instance, other symbolic options occasionally appear. Hannah T. King and her poetic contemporaries sometimes utilized mythic imagery from the ancient Greek tradition.[4] In one representative example, King addresses her spirit of inspiration:

> The jewel I hold of my soul a rich part—
> My Lyre! my Lyre, gives oceans of wealth
> I lave in its waters, abounding in health!
> I drink of its streams fresh from Helicon's fount—
> And into the regions of poesy mount.
> Parnassus I climb—from its glorious hight,
> Earth recedes from my vision in mystical flight.[5]

Or, to pick up on the first line's reference to the "jewel" of inspiration, Mormon women writers also used the imagery of treasures and metallurgy in order to express their poetic thoughts. Dead children are "jewels," or "treasures" who await their parents in heaven, while daily or extraordinary trials and tribulations sometimes are presented as the fires of refinement and cleansing.[6] While flower and nature imagery was the symbolism used most often, women writers did employ and, more vitally, they did have access to other symbolic tropes.

It is, therefore, important to understand why and how nature and flower imagery gained in favor. From a purely literary level, in comparison with the other options available to LDS women writers like Wells, King, or Young, one could legitimately argue that flower and nature imagery offered a network of symbols with greater width, depth, range, and flexibility of expression and adaptation. This imagery easily transformed into a theological language that could be employed for both maximum impact and subtle effect. For LDS women writers, these facts certainly helped to weigh the balance in favor of flower and nature imagery.

However, I would also argue that flower and nature imagery became such a powerful and eloquent tool of theological argument because LDS church members and leaders had an extended, often difficult relationship with nature from the moment the church was founded and even up until today. Historical circumstances played an important part in shifting the balance of meaning to the symbolic cortex of nature and flower imagery and away from other tools of expression.

ENCOUNTERS WITH NATURE

In today's Mormon community of the Southwest, the extended trip across the plains is still etched sharply and indelibly into the consciousness of church members. In 1997, the sesquicentennial of Brigham Young's 1847 entrance into the Salt Lake Valley, a group of volunteers riding in covered wagons or, much more difficult, pulling handcarts, reenacted the journey across the plains. This reenactment was extensively covered by local print

and broadcast media and it ended with the participants triumphantly welcomed into the annual Pioneer Day's parade, July 24th, as returning heroes and heroines. As Eric Eliason has noted, Pioneer Day celebrations make the journey West a sacred event, recapitulating the biblical exodus and allowing modern Mormons to tap into its sacrality, "through recapitulations and renditions of an idealized pioneer past, modern Mormons can return to sacred time and space."[7]

The participants and those who vicariously experienced the revisited trek through television and print coverage described the trip as a spiritual journey, a return to long-forgotten family roots, and a re-authentication of self and faith by means of a close encounter with both the beauties and the harsh realities of nature. For encouragement when she walked the trail as a re-enactor, Michelle Detweiler referred back to the experiences of her pioneer relative who had survived the trip of the (in LDS circles) infamous Willie Martin handcart company. This company had started across the plains too late in the season, got caught in winter in the mountains, and was finally rescued, though not before many in the company had died from hunger and cold. Detweiler told a reporter:

> "When I walk up a hill and can't get my breath, I think of her [ancestor Maria Jackson, who had lost a husband and two children during the ordeal]. She walked until her feet were frozen. Then she crawled until her hands were frozen. Then she crawled on her knees and elbows until she collapsed."[8]

A student from Brigham Young University who made the trip in a covered wagon with his family, Ryan Whitaker had similar feelings of awe and wonder. He writes: "The Mormon Trail is a living entity. It has a special spirit about it. As I traveled it, I partook of the gifts it has to offer."[9] Whitaker specifically notes that the close encounter with nature was an important part of this awe and wonder: "I've seen the change of scenery as they left the rolling hills and were encompassed by the Rocky Mountains. I've felt the awe of first seeing the snow-capped Rocky Mountains and the security of being enraptured by them. These mountains seem to separate us, even in 1997, from the outside world."[10] Nature, as experienced by these modern pioneers, was an obstacle, but also the protective arm of the deity raised in defense of the chosen people.

These modern experiences are the nothing new in the LDS context. They directly and, in some cases, self-consciously echo the original, terror-filled and awe-filled encounters with nature on the trail. On the one hand, the pioneers seem to have visualized the trip—either their actual experiences

or the trip in the abstract—as a trail of grave mounds across the prairies. To reach the promised land, the human price the community paid was numerically and emotionally overwhelming. For the early LDS members and, specifically for the Utah pioneers, the God who was willing to save all, even those long dead, was also the God whose apparently ruthless dealings with his chosen people could only be understood by placing them within the eternal context. Perhaps more than any other experience, the journey to Utah tested the church members' faith in their God. The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith could be explained away on the scriptural precedents of prophets and martyrs, but the deaths of countless, apparently innocent children and women at the hands of a seemingly uncaring nature were harder to fit within the optimistic, LDS theodicy. The meaning of suffering was a major theme within the literature of LDS women and, perhaps even more pertinently, suffering was often placed within an eternal context and explained through the use of nature imagery. Partly because of the trail experience, the two elements—suffering and nature—were forever joined together in the minds and, therefore, the literature of LDS women throughout the nineteenth century.

Just as important, however, was the tremendous revelatory and divine power that these pioneers experienced on the trek across the vast, empty, and, to them, stunningly wild and inhuman Western landscape. From the remaining records of this journey, it is clear that if the pioneers had ever doubted the raw and overwhelming power of God, the trip across the plains blazed it into their individual and collective consciousnesses as nothing else had, or has ever since. God's majesty, God's blindingly awesome authority was on constant and convincing display for the travelers. One can conceive of this reaction in terms of Rudolph Otto's description of the divine manifestation, the holy or numinous, as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.[11] Otto's descriptive concept rings a distinctive bell as a way to communicate the simultaneously attractive and repulsive force of the experience for the pioneers as LDS members drove, walked, and pushed their way across the natural landscape. For them, through nature, God was experienced in all of his power, glory, and protection—but also in all of his mortal ruthlessness and seeming impersonality. During this extended sojourn, nature confirmed God's existence, his immanence, and, just as importantly, God's supreme inscrutability and seeming disinterest in the doings of mortals.

But we can also conceive of these poles of encounter with nature as being shaped by and then, in turn, shaping, the preexisting oppositional understanding of nature that we have already seen in the mainstream version of the "culture of flowers" literature. These pioneer encounters with

nature came to be recapitulated in the binary, literary understanding of nature as being made up of benevolent, nurturing elements and, on the surface, destructive, overwhelming elements.

The trail diaries and the private and public reminiscences of LDS women reveal an encounter with nature which was difficult at best and which, at worst, was a losing battle against antagonistic elements and difficulties. In her retrospective writings about the crossing experience, Eliza R. Snow contrasts the former sheltered, garden-surrounded lives of women members with the scene of these same women giving birth in wagons and out in the elements, "in tents and wagons—in rainstorms and in snowstorms." In a sketch of her life written for *The Women of Mormondom*, Snow writes:

> Let it be remembered that the mothers referred to, were not savages, accustomed to roam the forest and brave the storm and tempest—those who had never known the comforts and delicacies of civilization and refinement. They were not those who, in the wilds of nature, nursed their offspring amid reeds and rushes, or in the obscure recesses of rocky caverns. Most were born and educated in the Eastern states. . . . There they had lovely homes—decorated with flowers, and enriched with choice fruit trees, just beginning to yield plentifully.[12]

Rather than the cultivated and civilized nature that they were surrounded by in their home states, these women entered the realm of wild and untamed elements. From their predictable and unthreatening lives they were catapulted into the liminal margins of natural uncertainty, symbolically described as the epitome of unproductive and dangerous nature: swamps (rushes and reeds) and deserts (rocky caverns).[13] Snow conveys the harsh realities that such women pioneers experienced and the deep impact these experiences had on the individual and collective consciousnesses of these women.

Even more telling about the impact of this experience on the LDS community, but especially on LDS women, are the descriptions of the crossings that so often were recorded posthumously in the diaries, journals, autobiographies, and oral histories of those near and dear to the pioneers. In these secondhand accounts we can see the raw and primary encounter with nature has been transformed into a religious, mythical experience of heroism and even martyrdom. Lifelong teacher and resident of the Southwest, Martha Cragun Cox puts the entire experience in an eternal context when, in her memoirs, she describes the journey across the plains made by her sick mother and father: "Many of the incident[s] are recorded only on

the scroll kept by the angels."[14] According to Cox, only the guardian angels in heaven knew the exact number of dead whose graves line the route to Utah and who were all victims of devastating sickness, or martyrs in the battle against a pitiless and pounding nature.

In a particularly pathetic story of one of these anonymous deaths, Cox highlights the antagonistic relationship between Mormon women pioneers and the warring elements of nature. As her parents crossed the plains, a widow lost her seven-year old daughter to sickness during a terrible and raging storm. The child tried to speak her dying words of comfort to her widowed mother, but the storm was too loud and wild. In desperation, the mother prayed to God that she would be able to hear her child's last words: "At once the spirit of the child arose and went out on the words of a beautiful hymn song, sung by the dying little one, and above all the roaring of the wind, the mother heard every word and her heart was saved from breaking."[15] While God briefly intervened to bring comfort, like so many of these stories, the tragedy was only lessened, not averted. The funeral ceremony was rudimentary: the next morning the girl was wrapped in a blanket and buried because the company could not spare the material or the time for a proper burial.

Yet the same powerful and ruthless nature that stole life away so quickly and, apparently, so senselessly, also inspired immense and unending reverence for God. In an autobiographical piece entitled, "A Little Story of the Experiences of Sara Alexander When Crossing the Plains in 1859," Alexander accurately and feelingly captures this sense of awe, of *fascinans,* of active and uplifting engagement with nature. As a convert to the faith, Alexander crossed the plains in 1859, twelve years after the first party led by Brigham Young entered the Salt Lake Valley. By this point—only ten years before railroad connected the coasts and effectively ended the pioneer experience of wagons, prairies, and mountains—the church had developed a highly organized and efficient method for members to make the journey. Alexander describes a trouble-free and harmonious crossing in which most problems had been anticipated, each person was sufficiently equipped for the journey, and camping places were already appointed. Perhaps because of the relatively easy journey in which neither travelers nor cattle were lost, Alexander was able to sit back and enjoy the scenery and the events along the way.

Alexander describes the trip as an extended encounter with God, as a period of freedom and removal of restraints, traditions, and customs—as, to use the vocabulary of Victor Turner, a time of extreme and invigorating liminality. Jan Shipps has compared the trek across the plains and the early settlement of Utah as a time of millennial and transitional existence when

all the old structures, institutions, and hopes were abandoned for the promise of a greater and more eternal glory.[16] This sense of wonder and hope pervades Alexander's sketch. Clearly, this was a life changing, monumental, and liberating event for the twenty-year old. Alexander understood that this was a liminal and enjoyable experience because of the close relationship between the travelers and God and because of the inherent characteristics of human beings. She argues that humans enjoy the primitive life, that they take pleasure in roughing it, and that this instinct drives men, in particular, to push the boundaries of civilization, to emigrate and to build up new countries.[17] In her words, the joy in this kind of journey derived from the fact that: "It is free from responsibilities and conventions."[18]

Seemingly taking a page from the book of Romanticism, Alexander strongly identified with the apparent primitivism of the Native American peoples whom she encountered on the plains. Unafraid of the constant presence of Native Americans along the way, Alexander loved to watch them ride bareback beside the wagons. She writes: "It is one of the grandest sights my memory recalls."[19] While Alexander was drawn to her understanding of Native American life, these observations also reveal Alexander's assumption that the more "uncivilized" and the more "primitive" the people or the scenery, the closer they were to some kind of purity and authenticity—to some kind of rapport with God as the focus of this authenticity. Alexander reveals herself to be very much living within the assumptions of American nature religion.

Her own experience of "primitive" camp life close to nature facilitated a revelatory and powerful encounter with her God. After dinner had been cleaned up, the elders and leaders of the party would gather with the group around the campfire and much singing, praying, and teaching would ensue: "Those evenings recall memories of the most spiritual and soul-inspiring religious sentiments I EVER experienced."[20] Even more intense, however, was the feeling of helplessness and insignificance that overtook Alexander when all had retired and she was alone in her bed waiting for sleep. It was then that she comprehended her small existence within the awesome natural environs of the plains. She recalls: "Then was the time that the supremecy of One All Ruling Power was the greatest and grandest. Alone in the stillness with the Supreme Ruler over all, in that apparently boundless space,—THOSE were the SERMONS that impressed *me*."[21] More than the elders and the leaders, nature acted as a conduit of God's grace and God's assurance of an eternity after the limited spaces and times of mortality. Nature terrified and tormented the pioneers, but also deeply touched them with a sense of the immortality, immensity, purity, and authenticity of God.

This dual antagonistic-reverent relationship between LDS members and nature did not, however, end when the pioneers reached the promised land; indeed, the stakes got higher and the costs potentially even greater. The LDS church was now in an almost entirely (from a Western European point of view) unsettled arid and desert environment. Added to this was the fact that the vast mountains and plains cut off the community from easy access to the resources and help of the outside world, even as they served to protect the community from those same hostile outsiders. When, at the turn of the century, Olive Woolley Kimball moved from Salt Lake City to Arizona because her husband was appointed president of Saint Joseph Stake, the climate offered particular challenges to farmers trying to eke out a living from the land. In March of 1900, the leader of her community was worried about the possibility that the crops would fail and, therefore, motivated his membership to pray for relief. The effort met with seeming success as Kimball notes in her diary on March 21st: "It rained quite hard during the night, that was in answer to the prayers of the saints in this stake as we had been requested to fast and Pray every Sunday in the month of March for rain."[22] Even after the area had been settled for more than fifty years, LDS men and women were still battling nature so that they could simply survive on a season-by-season basis.

However, overall, LDS women writers and recorders of this period did not emphasize the dryness and barrenness of the land. Though the difficulties posed by an arid environment remained an omnipresent subtext, writers paid most attention to nurturing and benevolent elements of nature. They were astonished and celebrated when nature offered a beautiful and yielding scene or circumstance. With this selective focusing, nature and flower imagery took on power and meaning particular to the LDS community because of specific historical and environmental circumstances and experiences. Benevolent nature was not simply a pretty, poetic tool, but became a powerful, symbolic means of spiritual communication and discourse that awakened immediate understanding within a common base of readers.

We can see this refocusing on the benevolent and positive aspects of nature in women's descriptions of life in the dry, desert regions of the Southwest. As a married woman with children, Elvira Nash Parkinson moved to the Preston Ward in Idaho in 1884 when her husband was called to be bishop of that ward. In her autobiographical reminiscences, Parkinson describes Preston: "At that time Preston was a desert sand ridge. Not a spear of anything green was to be seen, and the few families there were in desperate poverty. There was no water for crops."[23] This sandy, desert environment brought Parkinson to the brink of despair, but also spurred her to carefully nurture whatever greenery she could coax from the soil.

> No one counted any sacrifice too great to redeem the soil, which they were at last able to do. I used to sit on my doorstep and cry with homesickness, and think if I could just see one piece of green vegetation I would be content. . . . We set out some poplar trees each side of our walk and I think William planted them nearly six feet deep. I watered them every day to get them to grow, but the well would go dry, so we secured a large candy bucket and saved the water from the hand basin to keep them alive, and in desperation I used the soapsuds from washing. Despite the predictions of all that I would kill the trees, they grew and were as dear as members of the family. These were the very first trees on the flat.[24]

Parkinson was so profoundly affected by her dry environment that the poplar trees in front of her house became symbols of her determination to live and thrive; they also became almost as important as members of her own family. Parkinson, her family, and friends viewed the barren and the more beneficial aspects of nature as distinct and meaningful characters and representations. They came to understand that the benevolent aspects of nature represented a triumph of faith, civilization, and religion.

In these settlement struggles, the premier symbol of benevolent nature, the flower, became a particularly meaningful symbolic element for the LDS community. In probably the most prominent example of this, a flower, the Sego Lily, literally helped to nourish and keep alive the earliest groups of pioneers who struggled to successfully farm an unfamiliar and dry land prone to infestations of locusts and crickets. In numerous pioneer accounts, women record that they and/ or their families were driven to eat the bulbous, nutritious root of the Sego Lily, a flower native to the Salt Lake Valley. The biography of Mary Ellen Holt Alston, for instance, describes how she and her family would consume Sego bulbs, along with greens and trout, when food was scarce in 1860s Utah.[25] The community, particularly the women of the community, felt so indebted to the flower that it was selected as the Utah state flower and the Relief Society emblem in the early twentieth century. First editor of the *Exponent,* L. L. Greene Richards wrote a paean to the Sego Lily in which she praises the flower for representing "faith" and "hardihood" because it provided food for God's chosen people. Deliberately paralleling the Mormon experience with that of the early New England Pilgrims, Richards writes:

> When strong men reeled from hunger, women fainted,
> And little ones cried plaintively for food,
> Came the dark Indian, with face bright painted,

> Pointed where Sego plants the hilltops strew'd;
> And from that day the modest flower was sainted,
> Whose juicy bulb had famine's rage subdued.[26]

Hardihood, faith, and humble self-sacrifice were all virtues that Mormon women strove to emulate, especially in their work in the Relief Society. These qualities were what helped to "saint" these Latter-day Saint women. The Sego Lily took on exemplary meaning for women as it helped them to define themselves within their new religious community, environment, and history. The Sego Lily became the Western, Mormon equivalent of the mainstream literature's harebell: enduring and self-sacrificing through troubles.

In her account of her first visit to the Saint George Temple, LDS historian Juanita Brooks brings home forcefully the eternal context of the pioneer struggles and experiences with nature—especially as they were made meaningful by the symbol of flowers less utilitarian than the Sego Lily. As a young girl living in southern Utah at the turn of the century, Brooks and her family made the trip to Saint George in order to hear the prophet speak and to visit the Saint George Temple and Tabernacle grounds. Since she had lived all of her life in the extremely dry climate of southern Utah, Brooks was overwhelmed by the temple's carefully tended lawns and flowers. Most importantly, however, she understood these beautiful natural elements to be evidence that she was standing on especially holy and sacred ground. Brooks recounts that her father unloaded the family at the edge of the temple grounds and warned:

> "Stay right here until we can all go in together," he said, "and don't go racing and chasing around. Remember that you are in a holy place, before the temple of the Lord." He needn't have said that, for it was almost like entering the gates of heaven. Green grass, thick and springy, stretched to the far corners, with flowers lining the walks and edges worked into designs of circle and star; large trees here and there offered shade. Surely there could be no more beautiful spot than this.[27]

Though in other parts of the country, the temple garden might have been beautiful and fitting as a setting for a religious edifice, Brooks found this garden unearthly and amazing precisely because it was preternaturally lush *and* associated with a sacred building. Lurking behind this awe is the assumption that the garden was beautiful because it was sanctified ground. In its conjunction with the Saint George Temple, this lovely garden signaled—and was seen to be actually created by the power of—a greater and holier reality working miracles in the dry desert.

In another girlhood memory, Brooks reinforces for the reader even further the holy associations that flowers and lush nature held for the inhabitants of southern Utah. In this incident, Brooks was walking home and remembering some of the stories that had been told to her about Brigham Young. Though Brooks held Young in great esteem as a prophet of God, she was horrified and could not comprehend the fact that children had thrown flowers down on the road before him when he visited the arid climes of "Dixie." She thought to herself: "This last seemed hardly fitting to me, with flowers as scarce as they were in this part of the country, to throw them down on a dry, hot road for horses to walk over, even if they were Brother Brigham's team."[28] Even God's selected messenger, Brigham Young, did not warrant the waste of the sacred flower. The scarce and unusual had become for Brooks representative of the holy and eternal.

As part of an attempt to stay connected with their roots, LDS women brought with them to the intermountain West nature and flower imagery and poetry. But because of the intense and continuing LDS encounter with nature out on the plains and in the process of settling the desert Southwest, this imagery was activated as a particularly effective means of communication and argument. LDS women writers did not explore and utilize this symbolism out of random chance; on the contrary, their history and lives led them towards this imagery and symbolism. In the encounters with nature on the plains and in the settlement, the LDS community came to see nature as a definable and meaning-filled character that represented both the deepest despair and the highest hopes of the LDS community. The historical and continuing experiences of the LDS community created a literary environment in which nature and flower imagery became an attractive and effective option to fill in the theological holes and needs of LDS women writers.

POETRY, WOMEN, AND FLOWER AND NATURE IMAGERY

Literary scholars Paula Bennett and Shira Wolosky have shown that in the nineteenth century, American women utilized poetry as a genre that, bridging the public and private realms, acceptably allowed women to openly express their views on a wide range of social, political, and religious issues.[29] Mormon women writers followed in this tradition, but, because of developments within their particular religious community, focused their expression on religious issues. One of the reasons that flower and nature imagery was adopted and adapted by LDS women writers was because this imagery was conveyed often and especially effectively by means of poetry, and poetry was viewed as a particularly suitable vehicle for female communication and

expression, especially the expression of revelatory messages from the divine realm. Mormon writers examined in great depth the meaning, purpose, and importance of poetry for both the reader and the writer. For Mormon women authors the use of poetry to present nature and flower imagery was dependent on a three-branched set of intertwined associations and assumptions. Poetry was closely associated, even equated, with women, with flowers and nature, and with an intimate connectedness and understanding of God. Women, poetry, and nature imagery all were seen to work together to create a refined, pure, and religious discourse that tapped into the confluence of the divine realm and the natural world—a confluence that has been and continues to be a common meeting place within American culture and religion.

Writing was identified as the most efficacious means for women to spread the word of God to unbelievers outside of the LDS community. Writing was the female missionary tool: it allowed women to express their thoughts and truths without having to leave their designated realm of home and family, or speak in public at often confrontational missionary meetings. By writing, women could attend to their home and familial duties while also furthering the cause of the LDS community. Especially during the late-nineteenth clash between the church and the federal government over the issue of polygamy, many women defenders of polygamy felt compelled to proclaim their feelings through the medium of the written word, and Wells and other contributors to the *Exponent* were only too happy to praise and encourage this kind of literary action. In an 1884 series, "Literary Women of Utah," the anonymous author, perhaps Emmeline B. Wells herself, defends and lionizes women's written work.

> The time has come when the Lord is not only willing that their [women's] voices shall be heard in the land, but His Spirit calls upon them to speak, and they feel that they must do it. The testimony of the truth which they have often borne to each other is burning within them and they feel they must give it to the world. They cannot go on missions, to be sure, and stand before congregations of the world to bear this testimony but they can send their voice abroad through the medium of the press.[30]

Writing allowed LDS women writers to weigh in on the current controversy, to express their "testimony of the truth," to make their voices heard in a decorous and lady-like manner. In many ways Mormon women were following the lead of popular mainstream American women authors/moralists such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catherine Beecher

who effectively swayed public opinion without seeming to step outside their family circles.

Beyond the fact that it allowed LDS women to conform to contemporary social norms, writing in and of itself was viewed as an inherently powerful means of communication and expression. When they wrote, LDS women took decisive action. Their writings had a lasting effect: they were not simply the ephemeral and forgotten words of a speech or a sermon. This means of expression acquired revelatory dimensions when women wrote as a vehicle for conveying a message of truth and divinity. The above anonymous author describes this primordial authority of women's words when she likens them to powerful elements and forces of nature.

> Whether their [women's] words come to us as the glorious sunbeams, brilliantly lighting everything with their rays and dispelling the darkness, or as the lightning flash, quick, decisive and sure, every word penetrating to the marrow, or with the cheery patter as of falling raindrops, or whether, best of all, they come like a holy healing balm poured in upon our hearts, as if dealt out by a generous, loving hand, lifting the care and sorrow that has settled there, they carry with them the same spirit of truth and godlike purity, which is being and will be felt by all the world, and they will not fail to leave their influence upon it.[31]

Like the cleanness and purity of natural elements, women's words cut through the clouds of untruths and deceptions and reveal God's will in either a flash of revelation or through a gently persistent hum. Women, these lines argue, could shape their world for the good through the power of their thoughts made manifest by their pens.

A particularly powerful and appropriate way for LDS women to express themselves was through the genre of poetry and verse. This very much conformed to the expectations within the wider "culture of flowers" literature that this was a female-identified discourse. According to the logic of the times, poetry was close to the hearts and talents of women because it enabled the poet to express the beautiful and delicate thoughts that arose from their gentle and sensitive, womanly beings. Following this argument, noted poet, friend of the *Exponent,* bishop, and son of Emmeline B. Wells' second husband (by another wife), Orson Whitney wrote an exposition on the meaning and authority of poetry in which he configures poetry as the ultimate bearer of sublime feelings and expressions and, significantly, as being a mothering and wise female. He addresses his audience at the end of the essay: "Thus, my hearers, is poetry shown to be the

elder sister of history, the mother of language, and the ancestress of civilization."[32] Poetry, he says, is the first, the most delicate, the most beautiful, and the most powerful messenger of God's will. Not surprisingly, then, in practice in the LDS community, women were seen as being the most appropriate and "natural" exponents of this primordially female genre and means of expression.

Within LDS thinking and practice, we arrive at the intersection between women, poetry, and revelation. Not only did an important LDS writer and thinker like Whitney make the claim that poetry allows a writer to express most authentically a message or revelation from the heavenly realms, but, repeatedly, in practice, we see that LDS women writers actually attempted to use poetry as a means of religious, even revelatory communication. Considered to be a prophetic revelation, Snow's hymn, "O, My Father," is the best example of a revelatory message delivered through the medium of poetry by a woman. In many ways this poem/hymn stood as the model and inspiration for many other women poets and writers. Writing in honor of Snow's eightieth birthday in 1884, one of her fellow poets reflected on the lasting impact of this important work on its listeners.[33] For this poet, the hymn had such divine power that those who listened to or recited it were immediately lifted up into the supernal realms from which these verses were thought to have first descended.

Within the LDS community of the time, all true poets, even those with less renown and respect than Eliza R. Snow, had to reach these heights of mystic or revelatory engagement in order to pass on a worthy and worthwhile message for their readers. Ideally, the prophetic foundation of "O, My Father" had to be captured by every poet. In an essay, "Poetry," Hattie F. Clough explicates this assumption in fuller detail:

> Poetry, the language of the soul, 'the blossom and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passion, emotions, language.' It is something divine. It is the echo of the music that heavenly choir which causes the 'strings in Being's lyre' to vibrate, and respond in notes far from being in perfect unison yet to our dull ears in sweetest cadence.[34]

In direct, affirmatory response to Clough's contention that poetry was a vehicle of highest revelation, Hannah T. King wrote a poetic musing on the mystical, spiritual experience of this meeting of the human and divine mind. Employing imagery from the ancient Greek poets, King affirms the exhilarating experience of poetic inspiration:

> On Pegasus mounted, with full scope of rein,
> I pass into regions of gorgeous delight,
> Where day is eternal, with sunshine all bright;
> Is this not a boon no mortal can give?
> Is this not a gift for the life we now live?[35]

For both Clough and King, poetry was not just a fine art, or a form of literary composition, but an inherently divine, and uplifting experience.

The poem, "Lines," is a concrete example of how women within the LDS community equated poetry and divine revelation. The poem itself is standard LDS doctrinal fare: the necessary endurance of polygamy, the importance of attending to the Word of Wisdom (a code of dietary and behavioral strictures), the omniscience of God. The circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem are telling, however, because the messages were conveyed through the gift of tongues by Clara H. James, then interpreted by Rida Taylor, and finally put into polished verse by L. L. Greene Richards, the first editor and frequent contributor to the *Exponent*.[36] In order to most authentically communicate the revelations delivered in the gift of tongues, often identified as the primordial language of the Garden of Eden, or the Nephite language, Greene rendered them into poetic verse, in this way capturing both the message and the mood. Poetry was the medium that was able to convey the ineffable eternity and reality of heaven and God's presence—that literary tool which could describe most accurately the goal of salvation.[37]

Ian G. Barber has noted that within the LDS community women were seen to be "natural" seers and visionaries who could more easily than men tap into supernatural and divine messages and powers. Women rather than men most often exercised the gift of tongues.[38] While men sometimes attended and headed these meetings where women spoke in tongues, they rarely seem to have joined in the tongue-speaking themselves.[39] As the community settled in Utah and as the practice of tongue-speaking became routinized, this gender separation became even more pronounced, as did a separation based on age and prestige within the church. This is not to necessarily say that those who spoke in tongues were the one who wrote the poetry. Sometimes this was the case as, for instance, with Zina D. H. Young who was well known to regularly speak in tongues during Relief Society meetings, but who was also a sometime author, poet, and contributor to the *Exponent*. Rather, it is more accurate to say: the same forces that led to tongue-speaking also led to nature and flower poetry. This was the same impulse, expressed in the same form (verse), but by a different vehicle (the voice versus the pen) and method (ancient language versus modern English).

On the literary front, the closeness of poetry to revelation and prophetic messages was most effectively, though obliquely described when LDS women writers made an equation between poetry and flowers and nature. This equation is based on the more general connection made between women, nature/ flowers, and divinity/ virtue which will be explored in much greater in the next chapter. Here, the specific equation is based on two similar moves—poetry as the most effective means of describing nature and nature as the most accurate way of describing poetry—both of which, in turn, sit upon the assumptions of Albanese's nature religion that nature is closest to expressing the purity and regularity of God and God's laws. In an essay that expresses regret at the decline in popularity of some of the old-fashioned poets, specifically the well-known Felicia Hemans, Birdie Clyde reassures her readers that truth will eventually overcome the whims of the times and that this kind of poetry will endure because it expresses nature and truth. She writes:

> We shall grow tired of our superficialities, and find that true happiness, that bright gem for which philosophers of all ages have delved, lies not in fashion, but in the beautiful Nature which God hath wrought. Nowhere is nature more ideal and true, than in the pure depths of a guileless heart, and nowhere shall we find this beauty more perfectly interpreted than in some of the poets of the olden school.[40]

For Clyde, poetry and nature are directly related because both tap immediately into the ultimate, divine source of this purity and truth. Similarly, LDS women subsumed poetry into the world of nature and God's laws. As Hattie Clough declared: "Nature overflows with spirit of poetry."[41]

Most often, though, poetry was described as the crowning glory of nature, the flower—that which was thought to hold the highest concentration of God's truth within its frail and short-lived frame. Continuing the discussion of Felicia Hemans, in a later issue of the *Exponent,* Ruby Lamont praises both Hemans and Elizabeth Browning for their edifying and spiritually satisfying work and for verses that serve as eternal flowers for the hungering human soul:

> Flow'rs immortal have ye scattered, planted deep in fertile soil;
> Error deep have ye combated, truth and love reward your toil;
> Truth and Love have been your watchword, wreathed in flow'rs of chastest dyes;
> In your path there springs a gladness; round your names a glory lies.[42]

For Lamont, Browning's and Heman's work should be compared to flowers because their work expresses the same, highest truth which flowers express in their simple, pure existence. Both flowers and poetry authentically convey God's truth.[43]

Directly stemming from this comparison between poetry and flowers, a number of LDS women writers identified themselves as flowers to represent their literary, usually poetic personae.[44] "Hyacinth" (true identity unknown) and "Camelia" (Annie Wells Cannon), for instance, are two such authors who appear most frequently in the pages of the *Woman's Exponent*.[45] These authors and poets took upon themselves the role of flowers and became literary lifelines and prophets for their community of faith when they used poetry to express their religious feelings and beliefs. They became metaphoric, poetic messengers of God in a role that directly and self-consciously paralleled the more passive, but equally persuasive function of flowers as reminders and lessons of the divine. In different ways, both women poets and flowers were conduits of God's grace and God's truth to humanity, so the two became logically subsumed into one when poets adopted floral pseudonyms. In using these floral identities, poets wanted their readers to see the heavenly nexus in which they were inextricably involved and from which they were writing and expressing themselves.

For LDS women writers of the time, poetry was the language of revelation, it was the language of nature, and it was the language of women—three equations that were intricately linked together. These three associations were certainly already part of the "language of flowers" genre of poetry, even before LDS women adopted it and adapted it to their own circumstances. However, poetry was a form particularly appropriate for LDS women writers because within the practices of the LDS community, women were especially liable to receive revelatory messages from God and express them in song or verse in the language of tongues. As the form in which nature and flower imagery was most often conveyed, LDS women writers in both their public and private works easily embraced poetry. The pioneer experiences of the plains and the settlement cemented for LDS women the content of flower and nature imagery as a compelling and efficacious means of theological communication, but the form of poetry was also extremely fortuitous and fit both the expectations and practices of how LDS women would and should express themselves on divine matters. For the late-nineteenth century LDS community, poetry was the language of flowers, but it was also the language of women inspired by God to communicate the deepest, eternal truths to those around them.

Chapter Four

Femaleness, Nature, and Virtue: A Triangle of Theological Meanings

Associated with even the thought
Of woman is Beauty! and therewith wrought
Like fewest flowers in wreath entwined
Are all the rare gifts of heart and mind.

The central flower divinely white
Is Chastity! so pure it greets the sight,
And drooping modesty, so true and rare,
Here charms enhance, and make all traits seem fair.

With love as constant as the ocean's sight
And soothing sympathies and moistening eye,
With *Faith, Hope,* Charity! Combined
With gentle voice, and every act refined.[1]

In order to capture the specificity of how Mormon women writers used this imagery, we must explore in some detail the links they made between women and femaleness, benevolent nature, and abstracted virtues. All arguments using flower and nature imagery rest ultimately on the connections inherent in this symbolic triangle. At this basic level of equation, women writers and poets revealed their deepest assumptions about the gendered being, the essence of women and men, and, most importantly, the relationship between women/ femaleness, men/ maleness, and the divine realm. As Ortner points out, we can learn much about any given community by carefully examining this set of nature-centered associations:

> [G]ender becomes a powerful language for talking about the great existential questions of nature and culture, while a language of nature and culture, when and if it is articulated, can become a powerful language for talking about gender, sexuality, reproduction, not to mention power and helplessness, activity and passivity, and so forth.[2]

Working with this imagery, LDS women writers celebrated the vitality of femaleness within the home, community, and the overall plan of salvation. They took on the hard questions of their religious community and, in answer, presented clearly articulated, gendered, and authoritative landscapes.

These LDS women poets were using this adapted popular imagery in the same way as their contemporary, mainstream female authors: as crucial "cultural work." Jane Tompkins has shown how in the nineteenth century women writers employed sentimental novels as a way of expressing socially acceptable—and powerful—solutions to particular social and personal problems.[3] Though usually forgotten and dismissed by today's scholars on the grounds that they have little literary merit, and are derivative and repetitive, for Tompkins this very repetitiveness reveals the power and explains the popularity of sentimental novels.

> For a novel's impact on the culture at large depends not on its escape from the formulaic and derivative, but on its tapping into a storehouse of commonly held assumptions, reproducing what is already there in a typical and familiar form. The text that becomes exceptional in the sense of reaching an exceptionally large audience does so not because of its departure from the ordinary and conventional, but through its embrace of what is most widely shared.[4]

We see this same phenomenon in the popular poetry of mainstream and LDS women authors—the same repetitiveness and the same effectiveness. Mainstream poets tapped into commonly held assumptions about gender and expressed the "separate spheres" worldview so prevalent at the time. Likewise, the power of nature and flower imagery within LDS women's poetry derived its authority and effectiveness from its repetitiveness and adherence to widely held assumptions within the Mormon community. While the mainstream poets may have repeated popular theological ideas that were current in the culture but not attached to any particular denomination, LDS women poets articulated particular Mormon beliefs. Their authority was based on repeating Mormon theology through popular images, but, in this very repetition, they followed the more general literary

practices of contemporary popular women authors. LDS women poets were doing "cultural work" with their literary creations, but they were doing specifically Mormon theological, "cultural work."

Like their mainstream contemporary poets, LDS women writers employed nature and flower symbolism to configure female being as almost wholly positive and spiritually focused, while they presented maleness in more negative, ambiguous terms. These authors did not make any of the theological arguments with flower and nature imagery in an outright and straightforward fashion. Instead, they made the argument in a deflected and diverted manner. We can usefully conceive of this dynamic, theological argument within LDS women's writings as a kind of active symbolic triangulation. The three sides of the triangle represent the three elements in question: nature and flower symbolism, a set of virtue-laden abstract concepts, and femaleness/women. The presentation of benevolent, nurturing nature, then, is supported by its close association with femaleness, as well as its association with certain positive, spiritually identified virtues and characteristics. This is a kind of self-enclosed, self-sustaining symbolic system in which the creation of meaning depends upon the other elements within the system. This is a system where, for instance, the reader cannot fully interpret the meaning of nature without a conception of femaleness, nor interpret femaleness without the understanding of certain abstract virtues such as charity, hope, and mercy. Likewise, the audience cannot understand any of these abstractions without the buttressing conceptions of femaleness/women, as well as the tools of flower and nature imagery—and so on, and so on. Each movement and argument within this system feeds off the other sides and angles of the triangle that have already been established; these previous developments are then used as supports for further exploration and employment of the imagery. This is a movement of continuous reinforcement, usually without overt innovation. This cycle of symbolization is a well-rehearsed series of assumptions about the essential virtue and divinity of female being and, thus, the potential and real goodness of all women, the central necessity of the femaleness within the cosmological/theological structure, and the correspondingly crucial role women played in the microcosm of earthly, LDS society.

In the LDS context, women writers found profound meaning in this interpreted, idealized landscape because they used and described the landscape in poetic, revelatory terms. Even more than the mainstream authors who utilized nature and flower imagery, LDS women writers were able to authorize their literary conclusions because of the still viable place of revelation within the LDS tradition. When they described and wrote about nature, it was not simply a literary trope; LDS women writers argued that

they had gone to nature and found in that experience a deep and intimate connection with God and the eternal realities.

FEMALE-IDENTIFIED FLOWERS AND NATURE

Within the literature of LDS women, a central node, perhaps the central connecting node in this triangular network of idealized experience and imagery is the equation of women with flowers and, conversely, of flowers as innately and essentially female. Beyond simply referring to flowers with the feminine pronoun, a common practice even today, LDS women authors explicitly identified flowers and women with each other on two different, though intertwined levels of comparison: the physical and the spiritual.

Most literally, LDS women writers often describe women's features or physical characteristics as being flower-like. They bring the surface appearances of these two seemingly wildly dissimilar element—women and flowers—into close connection with each other in order to emphasize the great beauty and delicacy of both. Among contemporary, mainstream practitioners of the "language of flowers" genre, this was not a unique move; Marie Roseau used the delicacy and strength of the harebell as the basis of comparing it to a woman. The exemplars of delicate, female physicality, young girls, therefore, are quite often presented in the poetry and literature of LDS women as having the physical qualities and appearance of flowers. In "Back to Other Days," a poem ostensibly written by a mother to a daughter, "Lucy" writes about her child's early days through such a floral identification:

> Fair as a woodflower and as wild
> I see thy raven locks of hair,
> Thine eyes of the same midnight hue;
> Thy forehead like the lily fair,
> Thy lips like rose-buds bathed in dew
> It seemed that sorrow could not fling,
> One shadow o'er a heart like thine,
> So like the early flowers of Spring,
> Born but for love and Summertime.[5]

"Lucy" catches the wildness, the beauty, and youthful joy of her daughter when she associates her with the wildflower, the lily, the rose, the spring, and summertime. The appearance of her daughter reminds the mother of her attractive, natural surroundings; on the literary and poetic level, the young girl becomes a macrocosm made up of microcosms of the natural

landscape. In their physical presence and appearance, girls and young women represented in human form the same, almost unearthly beauty of flowers.[6] Both flowers and girls were standouts in the physical, visual environment of these LDS poets.

While flowers foremost represent the positive beauty of women and girls, LDS women writers also employ flowers in order to communicate the more ambiguous physical frailty and delicacy of women also noted by mainstream writers such as Roseau and the Goodales. The evanescence of both flowers and women is emphasized in the descriptions of the deaths of women that are so prominent a part of the obituary section of the *Exponent,* but also memorial poetry in general. Dying or dead women become quickly wilting flowers—beautiful, but fatally vulnerable to the exigencies of time and the elements. A notice of the death of Mary Haines Jacobs in the *Exponent* employs this kind of imagery to communicate the impact of her death on family and friends. "Another noble spirit has departed! one whom we had vainly hoped to keep with us longer, and we feel deeply the want of her presence, her beloved society, which was ever like the perfumed flower, dispensing sweets through every hour."[7] We can see a more straightforward comparison between the delicacy of women and flowers in an 1890 memorial to Nettie S. Alder, nineteen-year old daughter of prominent Mormon women's leader and regular *Exponent* contributor, Lydia L. Alder. The writer, perhaps Emmeline B. Wells, mourns: "Nettie's life was like that of a beautiful flower that has budded and bloomed to perfection, then drooped, faded and died. But like many beautiful flowers she will spring up into life at another season, more beautiful, more perfect, more lovable."[8] The precocious perfection, along with the accompanying inevitable physical delicacy caused the spiritually mature Nettie to be reunited with the, for her, more appropriate higher realm of existence. These memorializers seek to communicate that for all their physical beauty, perhaps even because of their physical and spiritual beauty, women, like flowers, can very easily wilt and die.

This physical-level comparison is not so simple and consistent. A number of LDS women authors, for instance, deliberately overturn this usual equation between women and the physical delicacy of flowers. Making the common association between a young woman and a flower, a mother encourages her daughter, in verse, to endure in the state of flower-like beauty and innocence by revealing her protective thorns when necessary.

> My Caroline: Of human flowers
> Thou art a sweet red rose;

A royal spirit, proud and fine,
Within thy being glows.

A wealth of constancy and love
Is in thy soul enshrined,
Yet rudeness' or injustice's touch
In thee a thorn will find.[9]

While in other places LDS women writers use thorn imagery to communicate more negative notions connected to the symbol of the flower, here the mother offers them to Caroline as the means and instruments of protection and endurance through trials. This is a much more active vision of female strength than the passive versions in Roseau's and Goodale's poems which, instead, express women's strength as endurance versus defense. Caroline's mother does not want her to be simply the quickly wilting and easily plucked rose of the garden, falling prey to the physical and emotional pitfalls of life. Rather, she tells Caroline to bloom on bravely, to shed forth to the world her beauty and joy unstinted. Given the rough realities of pioneer life on the frontier, it is not surprising that LDS women writers were willing, even compelled to invert the common equation between women and the beauty and delicacy of flowers in order to idealize and encourage women and femaleness within their faith community.

The surface, physical equations between women and flowers go beyond the simply superficial. As in most areas of LDS life, the physical and spiritual blended into each other as a continuum, rather than stood apart as a strict dichotomy. According to a revelation delivered by Joseph Smith: "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter."[10] In these descriptions of women or girls and flowers, therefore, it is impossible to draw the line between the transposition onto women of the physical qualities of flowers, as opposed to the symbolic, spiritual qualities of flowers. Within the public and private literature of LDS women, the direct, physical equation between women and flowers, while common, is not, in fact, the most vital equation between women and flowers. More often and more importantly, women and flowers are connected in a much looser, and, at the same time, deeper manner. For most LDS writers, women and flowers are similar in their essential, intrinsic, spiritual qualities, and these qualities are most easily exemplified and communicated through a description of the physical appearances and characteristics of flowers. The outer, physical appearance and growth of flowers is, for LDS women writers, the symbol

for the more important, inner characteristics and processes. The outline of the third side or process of symbolic triangulation—abstract spiritual and divine qualities that both flowers and women should exemplify—begins to emerge.

The stages of the flower's existence, for example, serve as convenient parallels to the cycle of women's lives, as well as their internal, spiritual developments and qualities. Each of these stages represents a mixture of the realities and the expectations about the make-up of maturing women and their place in the plan of salvation. At the beginning of life, girls are often depicted, within the literature of LDS women, as tender buds innocent and unready for the world, but exuding the scent of heaven and holding within themselves the unlimited potential for their future womanhood. The Goodales similarly expressed their youth and innocence by describing themselves as tender young flowers, as they also presented their baby sibling as exuding the very breath of heaven on his arrival.[11] Just such a situation is described by "Sister Plunket," who wrote a poem published in 1880 in the *Woman's Exponent* and dedicated to her ever-increasing band of young, female relations. In the poem, she presents the little girls as heaven-sent buds who brightened up a dull and difficult life with their mere presence. She writes in the first verse:

> Welcome! Welcome little Nieces;
> To this world of ours;
> Welcome, though ye come in dozens,
> Buds of human flowers;
> Fragrant from the hills eternal,
> Earthly airs ye taste;
> Making earth a garden vernal
> Otherwise a waste.[12]

Yet, unlike the mainstream poets, for "Sister Plunket," her nieces come literally from the eternal hills of heaven as spirit children of a divine parental pairing. There is nothing metaphorical or symbolic about this description, though on the surface it is so similar to its mainstream counterpart.

These girls are described as buds because of their physical immaturity, but also because of their emotional and spiritual youth. They hold about them the scent of heavenly purity and help to bring home to their female relatives the reality of both the Mormon preexistence and the future Spirit World. However, they will not realize their full potential until adulthood when they will, ideally, fully blossom and shed forth their fragrance of purity and innocence within their own homes and families, as well as

within the community as a whole. In her journal, Colenda Chrilla R. Adams expresses this view of fruitful and flowery adulthood in a poem to her sister, Fannie, who died in young adulthood from causes not described. Poetry, that language of the divine, was also, significantly, the most common private and public method of communication between living relatives and the loved dead, the divine in embryo, and it is in this dialogic, hortatory mode that Adams composed the poem.[13] Adams praises her sister in rather awkward, but heartfelt poetic fashion in the third verse of the poem by making the equation between Fannie and pure nature.

> Pale and sweet as the fairest liley.
> Pure as the falling snow
> Oh must thy life as fliting [fleeting?] be
> And quickly must though [thou?] go.[14]

The flower metaphor is expanded in the sixth verse, and the additional quality of fragility is attached to the flower and Fannie.

> I oft have tended some sweet flower.
> Guarded it with gracious eye.
> But when I came to love it well
> It was among the first to die.[15]

In these lines, we can see the easy physical equation between women and flowers, as well as the further attachment of positive, spiritual characteristics to this equation. In these two verses, this process of symbolic triangulation is manifest especially in the lines: "Pale and sweet as the fairest liley./ Pure as the falling snow." The young woman becomes, symbolically, the lily and the snow because these both (flower and precipitation) exemplify purity and sweetness, characteristics also displayed by Fannie, the young, deceased woman. The essence of the lily and snow make manifest, in their appearance, the abstract concepts of purity and sweetness; the life of Fannie also makes these concepts manifest in her physical appearance, but, more importantly, in her actions and the way she lived her life. Adams explicates the essential being of all of these concepts, elements, and women through reference to each other—they are all made up of the same stuff of goodness, virtue, and proximity to the divine.

Significantly, this idea of fruitful adulthood is a place where a connection between the flower as a means of reproduction and the fertility of women could have been made by women writers—and it is not. LDS women writers never make this connection explicit. This is not surprising

given that in their own journals women would not even record that they were pregnant. Instead, typically, they describe being unwell for an extended period of time and then six months later they announce that they have had a child. Florence Dean Ridges is unusual in that she mentions in her journal that she is feeling cross because she is pregnant, though she cannot bring herself to use the word, or even a euphemism: "I believe I am crosser because I am _ _ _ _."[16] The fertility of women and flowers is simply not discussed, though it stands as an implicit logic for the strong connection between women and flowers.

This multifarious, shifting physical and spiritual association between flowers and women is further cemented when we see that within the LDS community during this time period women and girls were actually named after flowers and other, female-identified parts of nature. This development was not particular to the LDS community; more generally, female flower surnames surged in popularity during the Victorian era.[17] As has already been mentioned, a number of LDS women writers took on floral pseudonyms in order to hide their real identities. "Camelia" and "Hyacinth" were the most prolific of these vegetatively masked poets. But, perhaps more significantly, at birth girls were also assigned the names of flowers and other natural elements for their permanent, given names. The diary of Anna F. Griffiths offers an illustrative example of this trend, even towards the end of the 1880–1920 time span. Born in 1905, Anna, in a September 1917 entry, mentions eleven of her girlfriends. Of these eleven friends, six are named for female-identified natural elements, a number of girls named specifically after flowers: Floretta, Fern, June, Lillie, Pearl and Garnet.[18] A couple of years later, in 1919, Anna moved to Salt Lake City from Springville, Utah, where she met another good friend, Violet.[19] This flower and nature symbolism, and the accompanying gendering of this symbolism, was clearly more than simply a superficial, literary device; the identifications within the symbolism had sunk into the LDS community's consciousness. At least some girls brought up in the heyday of flower and nature adulation, the 1880s and 1890s, very literally identified their own daughters from within the networks of symbolic and theological meaning. Girls and women were regularly named as human incarnations of these natural elements that were, in turn, identified as female within the public and private literature of LDS women.

While the flower serves as a central node in the triangulating process as LDS women writers create and reinforce theological meaning within nature imagery, these writers produce the full power of the flower as symbol and theological tool when they more generally equate the benevolent, life-giving facets of nature and femaleness. The identification between

femaleness and flowers is simply the reasonable outcome of an entire, underlying symbolic web of associations; female flowers are the logical offspring of a female spring who is, in turn, born of a female nature. The flower as female, as representing female qualities and lives, is not an isolated connection, but one part of a much larger and more complex network of female-identified nature imagery.

Within the literature of LDS women, Mother Nature or Mother Earth is the outermost ring of this network of natural associations. The writers take nature as a whole and anthropomorphize it into a female character.[20] The Goodales, Adams, and the *Ladies Repository* writers also identify nature as female and, specifically as a mother. In the LDS literature, however, Mother Nature stands out more often and more prominently as a defined character. Very frequently in Mormon women's literature, the figure of Mother Nature carries no in-depth explanation or interpretation. In both public and private literature, LDS women simply use the nomenclature and/ or personification in an offhand and unconscious manner. In her autobiographical sketch, for instance, Mary Ann Mansfield Bentley describes the festivities surrounding the annual celebration of May Day in "Dixie" (southern Utah). The children would pack up refreshments in a wagon and drive out to a field and according to Bentley, "a happy day was spent frolicing with Mother Nature."[21]

Most interesting, however, is when writers and poets flesh out and explore female nature in some detail. Benevolent nature, for instance, is sometimes described in the literature of LDS women as a young or middle-aged matron who goes about her business in an orderly and timely manner, keeping all beneficial natural elements organized and working with clock-like precision.

> Dame nature is busy, stirring about,
> Bringing glad beauty from dark things out,
> And cleaning her house from ceiling to floor
> Spreading new carpets from shore to shore;
>
> In curious corners and cosy nooks,
> She plants her statues, places her books;
> Vast troops of servants; she calls to their work,
> None can escape her, none dare shirk,
> Winter's traces she is fain to repair,
> Weaving new garments for those left bare;
> How charming she looks in her tucked-up sleeves,
> Actively turning over the leaves.[22]

These lines accurately describe spring cleaning—enlarged and presented with a triumphant and idealized gloss. In the mind's eye, we can replace the character of "dame nature" here with any of the LDS women who so often recorded the full-scale cleaning, scouring, and ordering regime that occurred every spring and fall and was aimed at resetting the home back to a kind of original (Edenic?) cleanliness and purity. Female nature, in this poem, is the benevolent and formidable orderer, the housekeeper of the physical and material realm of existence. She keeps the seasonal cycle in motion and on time, much like any LDS housewife and mother in charge of the bodily health and appearance of her children and husband who strove to maintain a schedule of meals, cleaning, church meetings, and recreational events.[23] This version of Mother Nature is a divinized, idealized, enlarged model of all LDS mothers and wives.

In another, related version of this symbolized narrative, Mother Nature appears in the literature of LDS women as a kind of feminine, imminent, physical partner or paramour to God the Father's removed and spiritualized, though ultimately more powerful and controlling presence. Nature, as God's creative and material partner, here exists to remind all of the reality of God and God's laws and to manifest them physically within her very self, within her body of natural elements. For popular LDS poet, Hannah T. King, for instance, female nature is God's child and heir on earth—his beloved, his imminent prophet, his living Bible, his earthly exemplar.

> Nature! glorious nature! 'tis of thee I love to sing,
> And thy stupendous 'changes,' how lovingly I ring;
> Well might the unenlightened, but the still adoring soul
> Before thy Godly presence, bow down without control,
> The child of God thou truly art, his image thou dost bear,
> His handmaid, his beloved one! on earth, his chosen heir;
> In all thy footprints, God is seen, and in thy beauteous hand,
> And in thy smile, and fostering care, as witness thou dost stand
> Of Him, the great creator of all the eye beholds,
> And all the starry worlds above, that the firmament unfolds.[24]

Nature acts as the female, creative, graspable, and understandable aspect of the highest and, in mortality, unknowable, patriarchal God. Her simple existence exudes the laws of God and shows how one must live in order to be in harmony with God. She is the indisputable and continually present proof positive of God's existence and God's goodness. Her existence cannot be separated from God's existence.

In elucidating the literary character of Mother Nature or Mother Earth, LDS women writers were expressing a particular Mormon theological concept by means of a popular form of expression. Female, anthropomorphized nature has precedent in LDS theology. D. Michael Quinn notes that both early Mormon scripture and early Mormon leaders promulgated the belief in a living, breathing earth: "Mormonism's first two prophets and two senior apostles affirmed that the physical globe (earth) had a person spirit capable of speech, birth, breathing, transgression, sexual reproduction, death, and resurrection."[25] As demonstrated in Mormon scripture, this living earth was a mothering female. In Joseph Smith's version of the biblical Genesis story, Enoch witnesses the travails of earth speaking as a distressed mother:

> And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?[26]

LDS women writers took this concept and fleshed it out via nature and flower imagery. The general idea of a living, female earth becomes more particularly Mother Nature as assumed presence, thrifty housewife, or God's earthly, imminent partner.

This literary landscape becomes still more complicated. All the other benevolent and beneficent elements of nature aid Mother Nature in her roles of comic housekeeper and God's earthly partner. The seasons and months, as anthropomorphized characters, are especially meaningful symbols within LDS women's literature and are often named as the daughters and helpers of Mother Nature. LDS women writers configure as female all of the seasons, except for winter. More specifically, as with the symbol of the flower, these seasons are envisioned as representing the arc of female life starting with girl/maiden Spring, matron Summer, and ending with elderly, wise Autumn. Women writers and poets idealize female seasons and months into purely beneficial and beneficent figures of generosity and divinity.

Within the literature of LDS women, spring is a prominent character in the triangle of flower and nature symbolism because spring represents hope, innocence, and goodness. Poems celebrating springtime, therefore, are numerous and sentimental. Emmeline B. Wells, a great lover of spring and beneficent nature, led the way in creating and contemplating a "pen picture"

of a beautiful, idealized, and female spring. So, for example, in "Awakening of Spring," she writes about spring, "the sprightly, coy, artless maiden" clothed in "garlands of green" and shyly peeping out from corners and crannies and who "with positive assurance of her real designs . . . will burst forth in fairylike beauty to gladden the universe."[27] Young girl spring arrives and spreads expectation and joy throughout the natural and human world.

LDS women writers further emphasize the femaleness and goodness of springtime when they evoke the three springtime months as also female. Significantly, April, May, and June are also the only months of the year that were regularly used as female surnames in Mormon and wider American society. June, as the flowery culmination of the season, looms largest of the spring months in the literature of LDS women. April and May become her younger, less stable, but well-meaning and beautiful sisters.[28] In an 1881 poem, "Reminiscences," celebrating the birth and birthday of Brigham Young, Hannah T. King makes June the lovely mother who greets and nurtures the young future prophet, almost as—in Greek mythology—the nymphs nourish young gods and heroes to their adult strength and power.

> June! Yes June, the glorious, regal month,
> When earth was strewn with flowers, and the sun
> Shone forth in full effulgence, bright and warm,
> . . . . . .
> And [June] in her grand and queenly step went forth,
> And stretching out her beauteous arms received
> Within their circling fold a baby boy![29]

June is the semi-divine nurse of a child who is destined to become the conduit of God's will. Nature is depicted as the first significant and heaven-sent influence on the path that Brigham Young will take. June metaphorically sets him on the straight and narrow way with her blessing and care, playing in the poem very much the same role that any earthly mother would for the spirit children sent to her. June becomes a shining and glowing example of female divinity, goodness, beauty, and strength.

However, perhaps most powerfully, female-identified spring and springtime flowers confirmed for readers the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of the resurrection of all of the faithful. Upon their deaths, the faithful would first return to their divine parents in the Spirit World where they would wait for Jesus Christ's second coming and their own resurrection into the millennium and the final progression toward individual divinity. The playful hope and joy of female spring becomes a deadly serious lesson with eternal consequences. Female-identified spring

and springtime months recapitulate in miniature one of the key moments of the LDS plan of salvation—the return to the happy, heavenly home of the Father and Mother Gods and the final resurrection with its promise of eternal progression toward godhood. Emmeline B. Wells writes nostalgically about the eternal meaning of the season of spring in her essay appropriately entitled "Suggestive Days."

> There are useful lessons to be learned from the death of the flowers, the falling leaves, the bare autumn fields; for nature, our great mother has done her work kindly and well; and the precious seeds are scattered, and germs are nurtured in her tender bosom that will spring into new life again at the approach of the gentle maiden spring.[30]

For Wells, the literal interpretation of the process of springtime rebirth also points towards greater realities. Flowers and nature serve as the visible lesson and promise from God of the bright future that awaited those who were willing to believe and live according to God's dictates. When LDS women writers interpret the spring as proof of the resurrection, they are presenting the most powerful and imperative lesson of spring and flowers. Female spring stands as the natural and God-given assurance of the final salvation. This is the highest lesson that God's earthly, female partners can express.

Though spring and the individual spring months remain a focus of hope and example in many poems and essays, anthropomorphized summer and autumn are just as beneficial, beautiful, and exemplary in their own, different ways within the literature of LDS women. Summer nourishes the hopes and dreams of spring, just as it nurtures the crops, while autumn offers the fully matured fruits of those hopes and dreams and stands as a time to reflect back on the past—to mourn, but, most fundamentally, to rejoice at the many gifts given.[31] Each of the three seasons, and each of the months within these seasons, is slightly different, with varying characteristics, personalities, and roles, but LDS women writers all seem to agree that, at their base, like female-identified nature and female-identified flowers, they are also female, beautiful, generous, beneficial, and virtuous. They are idealized, abstracted, divinized, and enlarged versions of faithful women. In these poetic presentations and as assisted by literary, benevolent nature, femaleness comes to stand as a central sign of the divine and a central connector between heaven and earth.

Within the literature of LDS women, this descriptive and idealized model of female, divinized nature and natural elements is further highlighted and reinforced because it stands in simultaneously binary and complementary

opposition to the negative interpretations of destructive, male-identified natural elements. As in the mainstream literature, these destructive, male-identified elements represent everything opposite to beneficent, female-identified nature. They are ruthless, destructive, uncaring, and, ultimately, ineffective when standing in direct opposition to the female-identified elements. For instance, LDS women writers almost always interpret winter as male and as a negative model in direct opposition to the three other female seasons. In an essay for a theology class at LDS College in Salt Lake City (now LDS Business College), "Aretta" uses the figure of winter to describe the inevitability of troubles in life, as well as the ability, through free will, to either increase or decrease those sufferings and trials. Here, an entire cast of opposed male and female natural elements represent the two poles of spiritual ignorance and spiritual understanding, or, perhaps more accurately, the trials of mortality and the possibility of spiritual enlightenment.

> Winter comes with icy sceptre held on high and when his breath is felt the world's wild pulses cease to beat and all her gladsome songs are hushed; but Summer follows with her hand of warmth and loosens all his frigid chains. Night comes, and wraps his sombre mantle round the earth—mantles, dark, and cold, and chill, but daylight drives night shades away.[32]

Just as female-identified nature is the ordered housekeeper, so the male-identified winter symbolizes the greatest danger to that finely tuned and delicately balanced natural household. The beneficial, female-identified elements represent the light of spiritual understanding and promise; the male-identified, destructive elements represent the darkness of spiritual ignorance. In this vision, male-identified natural aspects become the binary opposite of those female-identified natural elements which are presented as God's presence and proof on earth, and which are shown to have a close connection with divinity. These male-identified elements symbolically represent the barriers and burdens that must be fought against and overcome in order to advance towards ultimate and eternal happiness.

The poem, "Winter Winds," further highlights this binary opposition. Here, Lu Dalton employs the screeching and overpowering winter winds to tell tales of sorrows and injustices: people drowning on a shipwreck, the gore of the battlefield, the cry of orphans around their dead mother, lost wanderers, sin-filled cities, a horseman pursued through the woods by a pack of wolves, homeless spirits, and, finally, the sigh of women who:

> [V]entured their all
> Upon a man's promise—a mere empty word
> Which scarce with a ripple his memory stirred.[33]

This sigh carried by the winter winds is only a precursor to a scorned woman's ultimate statement of sorrow—the deliberate, desperate, and shame-filled drowning of herself and of her presumably illegitimate baby. The poem is no doubt part of the continuing contemporary debate about plural marriage: an indictment of non-Mormon society and an argument for the beneficial and necessary effects of a polygamous system in which men were able to indulge their supposedly libidinous natures, but also required to look after their wives and children. However, it also nicely demonstrates the consistent opposition between male-identified and female-identified natural elements within LDS women's literature. A parallel is here drawn between the disorder, confusion, and fear brought by some male elements of nature and the sorrow and destruction wrought by the unordered and male (and non-Mormon) parts of society. This gendered opposition is a kind of exaggeration for effect—a demonization parallel to the idealization of the three female seasons. LDS women writers use these gendered, literary abstractions to present a biting critique of contemporary social practices and structure. Most importantly, this contemporary, social critique is so effective because it is built on the assumptions about the essential make-up of the genders—femaleness as being close to the order imposed by God, maleness as chaffing against and challenging this divinely ordained order.

The system, however, is more complicated than this simple opposition between good female, natural forces and destructive male elements. The opposition is, in fact not binary at all, but, rather, shifting and complex, even complementary. Sometimes the peripheral, male elements are ambiguous rather than wholly negative. Winter is an inextricably necessary part of the round of seasons, almost the nighttime of the earth. Winter allows nature to rest undisturbed until she must wake and rouse her season daughters to take their respective, consecutive places in the round of the year. Identifying the stages of life with the seasons of the year, for instance, Hannah T. King writes:

> Winter. Nature again prepares to fold herself up in the habiliments of death, seeming death, who approaches and asserts his claim and gently lays her down in apparent collapse, but nature is infinite and immortal, she is instinct with life, hence she calmly falls into the arms of death, like a weary child on the breast of its mother; she has a perfect knowledge that he cannot hold her but for a little season.[34]

Male winter becomes a loving and compassionate mother and makes the gendered opposition not so cut-and-dried. Yet in this blurring we can see that while the male elements are not always destructive, they are beneficial when they are tapping into female-identified, maternal qualities of nurture. This reversal of the gendered binary opposition, in the end, reinforces the original opposition because it is dependent on the opposition for its meaning and imagery.[35]

FEMALE-IDENTIFIED ABSTRACT CONCEPTS

To fully understand this three-sided equation, we must take into full account the third side of the symbolic triangle, female-identified abstract virtues. In conjunction with this supporting side of abstract concepts, by means of nature and flower symbolism, LDS women writers advocate for and idealize femaleness as stable, nurturing, and beneficial, and also as being essentially constructed of qualities exemplified by divinity. We have already seen this argument hinted at when LDS women writers equate women and nature. But, by adding a number of personified virtues into the mix, LDS women writers make a more sustained and direct linking between women and goodness, women and virtue, women and divinity. Writers describe as inherently female certain key and positive abstract concepts, concepts that were vital to spiritual advancement and understanding within the LDS community. Chief among these female figures are truth, mercy, charity, hope—only the leading ladies among a large and variegated cast of abstracted characters.

For this identification of certain key virtues as female to fit into the triangle of women-nature-virtue, LDS women writers take two important steps within their work. Like the flower identification, most obviously and most basically, women writers anthropomorphize these abstract concepts, such as truth, faith, hope, and charity, as female. LDS women writers portray these abstracted concepts and virtues as unyieldingly sweet, patient, nurturing, and beautiful angel-like women. As with the identification of nature as female, this is also a common move among more mainstream, contemporary authors.[36] Hannah T. King, in a published letter to the non-Mormon Emily Scott about the ins and outs of the LDS faith, creates the clearest and most direct picture of an abstracted virtue as female when she pictures truth as a beautiful, nude woman:

> I am like you in respect of searching for truth, the hand-maid of God; and I want to behold her in her sublime nudity as she came from the courts of heaven; I want no tinsel of the world to garble her chaste and

> beautiful form, and may my eyes ever be pure and clear enough to behold and appreciate her.[37]

For King, truth stands as the ultimate exemplar of purity and innocence, something that only those with "pure and clear eyes" can behold. Most significantly, King can fully communicate the meaning of the concept only when she describes truth as a woman descending directly from the "courts of heaven" in all her shining glory.

Memory as a gynomorphized abstract concept is another important character to be added to the cast of these feminized, virtuous concepts. When she talks about the process of remembering, for instance, Hannah T. King describes memory as a kind of awesome and female-identified divine gift:

> I shut my eyes I listen and can hear those thrilling chimes of bells—still can I call up the time, the hour, the association of feelings and ideas with all the vividness of actual presence; Memory, that wonderful gift, is awake, she opens her cells, long closed, and from them issue the spirits of that day, and hour, and the time of old.[38]

In another piece, "Memory the Curse or Blessing of Existence," King this time presents memory more explicitly as a soft and gentle woman who reveals the past through an imaginary theater of the mind. She writes: "Evening—as usual I am alone, and yet, not by any means alone or lonely; my brain is all alive with a vision of the PAST; memory by her mystical power draws back with soft and gentle hand a curtain, and a marvelous panorama opens to my view."[39] Like almost all of the positively female-identified, abstracted concepts, memory is soothing, helpful, and quietly effective.

Throughout Mormon women's poetry and writing, writers also parallel nature and female-identified virtues. Many abstracted concepts of goodness become idealized, female characters in the idealized natural landscapes of LDS literature.[40] Most tellingly, religion itself becomes the female embodiment of the persecuted LDS community, driven to the far reaches of Utah and protected by the figure of freedom:

> When Religion fled in terror
> O'er Atlantic's foaming brine,
> Freedom bade her proudly welcome
> In the West to build her shrine;
> Here she made her resting place,

From all other haven driven;
Here unveiled her holy face,
Here drew down the light of heaven.[41]

As nature is the visible, material witness and handmaiden of God on earth, so these personified virtues are the invisible, internalized handmaidens who implement God's laws on the personal and social levels. The abstracted concept of religion itself becomes an idealized woman who is, appropriately, hidden and preserved by the welcoming, nurturing, and protective embrace of Western, female-identified nature. When this female-identified natural element and this abstracted concept fuse together in solidarity, the very "light of heaven" shines down upon them in approval and protection. God favors and protects his earthly, female partners.

As with the opposition between female and male natural elements, personified female, abstract concepts such as truth, charity, and memory have their male, negative concepts as conflicting, complementary partners. Death is a personified concept that bridges the categories of both the natural elements and abstract concepts, but plenty of other, more obviously abstract concepts also appear.[42] Emily Hill Woodmansee configures penury and misfortune as twin brothers,[43] while prejudice becomes a man blocking the upward path of another woman writer.[44] As with the ambiguous, male elements of nature, these personified, male concepts seem to act as, in the above case, literal, obstructions to the female virtues. Like the male natural elements, they are the ultimately less powerful, but still troublesome oppositional male partners to their better, more eternally efficacious female paramours.

However, as with the opposition within the natural elements, the opposition within the concepts, is not so clear-cut and unambiguous as it first appears. Some virtues, such as freedom or justice, are presented as male, while a number of more negative concepts, such as pleasure and ignorance, are identified as being female.[45] When we combine the gendering of natural elements and abstract concepts, what appears, interestingly, is a much smaller and less prominent symbolic triangle of negative, female-identified natural elements and abstracted concepts—the darker shadow to the much brighter, more important triangle of associations.

The premier, focused symbol of benevolent, female nature—the flower—is also a central node among these negatively configured, female-identified aspects of nature. The flower here plays the same principal role as does the flower in the positive triangle, but in a destructive fashion. So, on the one hand, within this LDS literature, the female-identified flower is the symbol of goodness, beauty, love, and proximity to the divine. On the

other hand, the flower is also viewed as expressing vanity, worldliness, mortality, deception, and shallowness—those elements of mortal life that serve to distract and deflect seekers away from the true path of salvation. In "Something to Live for," flowers represent the dangers of temptation. The poet, "Emile," talks about enjoying the beautiful, but shallow aspects of life until her conscience gets the better of her and guides her away from these distractions. She interrogatively writes, in tones of admonition and warning for the reader:

> Is it gay with myriad flowers,
> Which are ever fair with bloom,
> Laden heavy with rich fragrance,
> Breathing always sweet perfume?
> . . . . . .
> Comes there ever o'er thy silence
> A sweet thrilling sense of awe,
> Just as if an angel presence
> Would thy soul from out thee draw?
> Does it whisper flowers are fading,
> Fairy visions float away,
> Things most sweet are only transient,
> All things earthly must decay?[46]

The double-sided nature of the symbol of the flower serves to demonstrate the difficulty of discerning the true and eternal from the shallow and deceptive parts of life. This double-sided nature highlights for readers the thin, treacherous line between the successful negotiation through the pitfalls of life and the potential entrapment and enslavement to the pleasant, distracting parts of the mortal journey. Here, flowers, like human beings and life circumstances, are hard to read.

Women writers cement the association between flowers and the flipside of positive spirituality when they conceive of certain abstract concepts as being female and negative. Like the troublesome flowers above, these negative concepts or qualities are roadblocks on the path of the faithful—they serve to distract and mislead. Attempting to give encouragement during the difficult prosecutions for polygamy, Emmeline B. Wells advises readers in a holiday piece: "It is easy to hold up one's head in prosperity, that requires no particular quantity of courage whatever, but to shrink into a nutshell because fortune, the giddy dame, has been playing us some mad freak is ignoble."[47] Fortune is portrayed as a female distracted from her better and truer self who, in turn, seeks to distract other women in their

walk around the pitfalls of mortal life. In her poem, "What Does It Matter to Me?," Emily Hill Woodmansee fills out this picture a bit more. She encourages her readers to ignore the distractions of fleeting Fortune and concentrate on the efficacious and eternal in life. She writes:

> Dame Fortune herself, like a see-saw,
> Pulls even her pets up and down.[48]

For these authors, female fortune is unpredictable, flighty, and dangerous to the female spiritual journey; in other words, fortune is in all ways the polar opposite of the virtuous, stable, and beneficial female-identified concepts such as faith, hope, and charity.

While these negative female-identified concepts are prone to lead seekers off the right track and to divert them from nurturing a better religious life in the present and a better ultimate life in the future, they also come across as insubstantial, with a shallow impact and purpose to them in the face of real spiritual commitment. They are the opposites of such qualities as hope, faith, and charity, but they are also on the opposite end of the scale in terms of substantiality and weight; one gets the sense that they cannot stand up to the more spiritual competition. The superiority of the abstracted virtues stands out when these virtues directly confront the negative qualities. In an 1883 editorial for the *Exponent,* the two sides face off in an imagined combat over the presentation of the LDS community to the public at large, a combat that will determine, in the minds of LDS women writers, the legal and physical existence of the community itself. Emmeline B. Wells encourages her readers to enter into the fray and controversy over the Mormon practice of polygamy, but to take the higher road in the confrontation and engagement with the non-Mormon foe. She writes against the anti-polygamy lectures of Angie Newman who was making the rounds of the then popular anti-Mormon speaking circuit. "Milton said: 'So Truth be in the field, let her and Falsehood grapple,' but as regards the women of the Church, Truth is scarcely in the field, considering how Falsehood has been flaunting her banner in the wind of public opinion. It is time Truth came forward to the rescue and threw down the gauntlet in defense of her own honor."[49] Wells assumes that, once she makes it to the field, Truth will be the last one standing and Falsehood will have no defense against her. Wells' narrative is about the battle over the portrayal of the LDS community in the mainstream press, as well as about the real consequences that those varying portrayals will have on the LDS community. But, more importantly, this is, for Wells and other LDS women writers, really about the eventual triumph of good in the universal scheme of salvation. Backed by God's infinite power, female-identified truth will be victorious in the end.

The darker side of flower symbolism within the writings of LDS women extends beyond an association with silly, vain, and distracting pleasures, and even beyond signifying death and the frailty of human existence. Women and flowers, being the closest natural and human elements to God are also those elements that, like Eve, are most liable to fall. When they fall they are all the more dangerous because of their assumed goodness, and because their outward appearances distract others from their true and spiritually dangerous natures. Women and femaleness, as the foundations of the social order and the plan of salvation, are also the most potentially destructive disruptors of that same order precisely because of the vital positions and roles they hold. Ultimately, this negative equation of women, nature, and destructive, abstract concepts—this smaller and darker symbolic triangle—serves to reinforce the lessons of the more positive symbolic triangulation: it argues that femaleness in benevolent or destructive forms is the key to whether society will prosper and whether the path to salvation will be completed. While one symbolic triangle serves to adulate femaleness and the other presents femaleness in a more negative light, both place women and femaleness as the central actors and creators on both the theological and social levels. Even with the darker side of symbolism, the overwhelming impact of this use of the flower and nature imagery is to show the readers that women and femaleness are inherently virtuous and especially close to God.

These female personifications of nature and the virtues—the stable cosmic housekeepers and God's earthly partners—are interesting developments in the context of the LDS community because of the presence within LDS theology of the figure of the Mother or Mothers in Heaven. One must ask the question: What is the relationship between female-identified nature and natural elements and this mother goddess or goddesses?

In the light of this unknown female deity or deities, women looked elsewhere for models of active femaleness in order to fill in the meaning, importance, and content of essentialized femaleness, their abstract understandings of femaleness and, no doubt, for knowledge about practically conducting themselves in day-to-day life. It is tempting, and partly accurate, to see the figure of Mother Nature and all her female elements, as the physical stand-ins for the largely elusive figure of the Mother in Heaven. Yet, because the Mother in Heaven is so rarely mentioned in either the public or private literature of LDS women, it is impossible to tease out the exact kinship between a heavenly goddess and female, divinized nature and natural elements. The answer is complex since Mormon women looked to a number of different places for models of behavior and action—first and foremost to their own, biological mothers and female friends and relatives,

and, second, to the paradoxically male scriptural/divine figure of Jesus Christ, as well as to other male and female scriptural figures.

Nonetheless, nature, natural elements, and abstracted virtues also served as important models and teaching tools. In relation to the Mother in Heaven, we can conceive of female nature and natural elements as symbolic aunts or grandmothers—extended, metaphorical relatives who provided examples in place of an invisible, divine mother. LDS women writers were not advocating the worship of an anthropomorphized nature. But, by utilizing this extended, literary relative of their spiritual mother, LDS women writers were able to explore more concretely the possibilities and importance of female divinity, being, and spirituality. Feminized nature and natural elements were alternatives that LDS women writers turned to in order to talk about why and how women and femaleness were vitally important to the community. Nature and flower imagery, therefore, reveals more about how these writers viewed the general concept of femaleness than about the specific concept of a divine female, though these two concepts inevitably blend together.

Even more than the mainstream interpretation of nature and flower imagery, within the LDS context, these assumptions about gender became essentialized because the theology of the church posited gendered divinities and, therefore, a gendered substratum of spiritualized material as the foundation of the world. The triangulating identification within the public and private literature of LDS women, between women, nature, and virtuous qualities is not only a symbolic or metaphorical relationship. Femaleness, by extension of the gendering of nature, becomes a direct connection to the heavenly realms of existence. Femaleness and certain natural elements really are God's earthly representatives; they are evidences of and resources for understanding the divine and the divine plan because femaleness had an actual, material existence within the LDS worldview.

Further, when these women authors speak of nature as female and as directly conveying the reality, laws, and goodness of God, they speak from their own experiences, from their personal encounters with both themselves and divinity within nature. Nature and flower imagery becomes a way of describing the religious, revelatory encounter with and interpretation of their natural surroundings. For these authors the beauty and rhythms of nature are foretastes of eternity and eternal happiness—it gives them a sense of the rhythms and laws of heavenly life that they cannot yet observe. Hannah T. King, in the poem "Silent Voices," writes about the prophetic utterances of nature and how they transport her soul "to a land of its own," to "a mystical zone."

'Tis a foretaste of that which in future will be,
A mirror upheld in which visions we see!
A picture presented—a realm of the soul,
Releasing the spirit from mortal control!

How we hunger, and listen to voices like these,
That come in the flowers, that come in the trees,
That come in the cataract roaring and wild,
That has often our soul of its sorrow beguiled![50]

The beautiful and beneficial aspects of nature speak directly to King's soul and bring her closer to a true communion with God. As a handmaiden of God and as God the Father's earthly counterpart and partner, nature expresses the truths and laws of God within her very existence. Femaleness stands as the base of experienced divinity. Sharing in the female being of nature, King is able to understand the message of God's handmaiden. Nature becomes a gynomorphized prophetess—one in a long line of respected historical and scriptural women upheld as models to the female portion of the church. By expressing nature's revelatory message, King herself becomes a prophetic poet for her community, not simply a poet using popular imagery. Nature serves as a visible and constantly available source of revelation, available to all. It appears as one of those God-given elements that, like family life, will allow human beings the gradual, but steady acquisition of knowledge of the divine. Within the symbolic triangle of femaleness, beneficial nature, and abstracted virtues, then, the real foundation of this three-way relationship is beneficial nature.

When LDS women writers magnify femaleness, therefore, they are making a theological and not simply a literary move because their arguments, finally, stand based on firsthand revelatory and mystical experiences. These experiences confirm and cement the authenticity of the literary exultation of femaleness and women. As practitioners of Albanese's nature religion and participants in Mormonism's revelatory worldview, these LDS women writers looked to nature as the purest, most direct expression of God's will. LDS women writers transformed nature into a tool for a practical, immanent kind of mysticism or religious inspiration, very much in step with the historic LDS focus on logic, commonsense, and material reality.

Given that they fill out femaleness as inherently divine and central within the spiritual landscape, LDS women writers seem to place themselves in rhetorical and theological opposition to their official institutional and theological resources: the Book of Mormon, the foundational significance of the priesthood. LDS leaders employed these resources to reclaim the

patriarchal aspects of the Judeo-Christian heritage by placing the father at the center of the family and church, and, thus, as the focal point of spiritual and social stability. These women writers and poets used the loose opposition between gendered aspects of nature in order to argue for the masked reality that femaleness was the stabilizing and ordering force of the natural and social worlds.

However, because writers made this argument within the overarching patriarchal structures and beliefs of the LDS church, readers probably did not absorb the arguments separately from these structures. These arguments by way of nature and flower imagery are woven around other articles, essays, and sermons that, for instance, encouraged women to follow and respect the priesthood. I would suggest that women writers were sometimes making explicit arguments for the moral and spiritual superiority of women. But, taking a more holistic view of the context of nature and flower imagery, when we read these arguments in the context of the wider LDS belief and institutional systems, we see not so much an opposition to those systems, but more of an attempt to balance and qualify them. Women writers were regularly arguing that they and femaleness were closer to God than men and maleness, but, perhaps more often, that women and femaleness were equally vital aspects of divinity and God.

Chapter Five

Motherhood and the Home in the Theology of Nature and Flower Imagery

> Make your home beautiful, bring to it flowers,
> Plant them around you to bud and to bloom;
> Let them give light to enliven your gloom;
> If you can do so, oh, make it an Eden,
> Of beauty and gladness almost divine;
> 'Twill teach you for that home you are needing,
> The earth robed in beauty beyond this dark time.[1]

While flower and nature symbolism was used by women writers to argue for a close association between femaleness, God, and the divine realm, flower and nature imagery was also employed to theologically support women's specific roles within the home and the community, especially the role of mother, and the overlapping, coterminous role of mediator of liminality for the wider community. Women writers employed nature and flower imagery in order to argue for the vitality and foundational importance of the particular manifestations of femaleness within the LDS home and community. They argued that women's peculiar work was ordained by the natural and divine laws of the universe.

LDS women writers advocated for the vitality of the home and motherhood by closely associating home with garden and Zion imagery, heaven/afterlife, and the preexistence. Like the triangulating symbolism that stands behind them, all these logical linkages are based on the assumption that each element in the chain is essentially similar. The picture of life in the preexistence is strikingly reminiscent of idealized life in the land of Zion

(Utah), which is also compared to life in a beautiful, Edenic garden. All of these associations work together to strengthen and support the primacy of motherhood. Through these associations, motherhood and the home are shown to be of, from, and modeled on the divine realm. Beneficial and benevolent nature as represented in the gardens of paradise is the common imagery that creates the connections between all these various elements and provides the frame of the argument.

LDS women writers utilized a symbolism that was rooted in the common experience of frontier life in which men and women had to contend with the realities of an ever-changing and ever-present nature. Yet they also wrote within a community that had access to a popular, idealized nature imagery and, most importantly, within a community that looked with longing to a heaven filled with only benevolent and beneficial aspects of nature. While the above connections were also made in the mainstream use of nature and flower imagery, in the LDS context they took on additional meaning because of the distinct, LDS belief that heaven was a physical place: a nature-filled version of perfected earthly life. This combination of reality and ideality created a powerful base of argumentation—the stuff out of which symbolism and theology is made, enlivened, and expanded.

The imagery as theological argument was essentially conservative (i.e., dedicated to traditional norms) and it is precisely in this conservatism that it derived its power, cogency, and widespread acceptance and utilization. This is not a symbolism and set of arguments that would have made the contemporary reader uneasy or uncomfortable. Rather, it leads the reader smoothly along the paths of already accepted suppositions and behavioral norms to conclusions that are not, on the surface, challenging or disturbing. Indeed, as scholars such as Ann Douglas and Lori Ginzberg have noted, in the nineteenth century, the importance and centrality of motherhood and the home was acknowledged and adulated in the popular and practical literature of the day. This supposition was used by both liberal and conservative women to reach out of the home and create charitable, benevolent organizations in an effort to increase the well-being and moral tone of society as a whole.[2] Most notably, Catherine Beecher made a literary and public career for herself by extolling the practical, spiritual, and emotional importance of the mother and the home to the family, and to society in general.[3] When they championed the cause of motherhood and home, LDS women writers were not arguing anything new or radical in the context of North American culture as a whole, but following a line of well-known and well-accepted reasoning. In their work, they maintained the very "feminized" focus of religion that Joseph Smith and his successors were attempting to diminish in the LDS restructuring of the church and the

family, the very element that these leaders argued was partly unbalancing the purity and truth of Christianity.

In actuality and following the mainstream American assumptions about gender, within the LDS community, beginning especially in the early twentieth century, central and local leadership representatives had many positive comments about women and their enormous impact on the family and society.[4] Within the LDS literature of the day, women are described by the male and female leadership as the ones who formed and nurtured the essential character of their children. Upon women was laid the responsibility for creating the moral and spiritual foundation of a child's future earthly and eternal life. In an 1887 article entitled "Our Children," "Aunt Ruth" (Ruth May Fox?) quotes Brigham Young from the *Journal of Discourses* on the vital importance of motherhood. Young propounds:

> I will tell you the truth as you will find it in eternity. If your children do not receive impressions of true piety, virtue, tenderness and every principle of the holy Gospel, you may be assured that their sins will not be required at the hands of the father, but of the mother. Lay it to heart, ye mothers, for it will invariably be so. . . . Mothers, let your minds be sanctified before the Lord, for this is the commencement, the true foundation of a proper education in your children; the beginning point to form a disposition in your offspring that will bring to you satisfaction, comfort, honor and glory.[5]

Mormon leaders further emphasized women's responsibilities to children by setting up a church organization for young people, the Primary Association, and having women run the group.[6] Within the LDS community, women were to take up the duty of correctly forming children's characters. So, while women did not have priesthood positions within the patriarchal institutional structure of the church, the community felt that they had great responsibilities within the home and towards their children. As can be seen from Young's statement, this was a difficult and weighty task fraught with eternal consequences for both mothers and children. Men and women leaders feared that those children who were not guided truly in early earthly youth were very liable to end up on the wrong side of the heavenly dividing line, and they felt that women were best able to prevent this possibility.

In answer to this tremendous responsibility, LDS women writers frequently expressed that women's roles within the home and community were not properly acknowledged, encouraged, and explained within the church and community. We have, then, a contradiction that LDS women writers were attempting to resolve in their own, literary and theological

way. On the one hand, the responsibility and importance of motherhood so well-known in contemporary American culture continued unabated in the LDS version of this culture. On the other hand, the patriarchal focus of the LDS community often deflected much of the attention, explanation, and exultation of motherhood and the home that was so widespread and popular in wider American culture. Recognition of the lack of recognition is a repeated theme throughout the Mormon women's sources. Women writers felt that their work as mothers was not properly seen and adulated by the community. These feelings of neglect seem justified by the sources. Certainly, in general church publications such as the *Millennial Star,* there was little space given to the subject of motherhood; likewise, in general church conferences of the time, speakers spent relatively little time on the subject. Scholar Linda P. Wilcox notes: "In the early years of the Mormon Church—in fact, even later in the nineteenth century—sermons and rhetoric about motherhood as an institution are relatively uncommon. Motherhood seems to have been taken for granted, requiring little comment."[7]

Emily Hill Woodmansee highlights this dearth and the consequent need for recognition in her poem, "True Wives and True Mothers." She argues that the titles wife and mother are not easily bestowed, but won only "by patience and pain":

> 'Tis easy to toil
> When the world is agaze,
> When the mouths of the many,
> Are speaking our praise,
> When we know that the future
> Our record will write,
> That as recognized heroes
> Our names will be bright;
>
> But to bear up the burthens
> Of everyday life,
> To shoulder the duties
> Of mother and wife—
> The numberless duties,
> That nobody sees;
> What praise is awarded
> Such labors as these?[8]

The author then goes on to answer this question by providing the praise herself and demonstrating, in shorthand, the purpose and goal of much of

LDS women's literature: to justify and magnify the importance of women's roles within the home and the community. The community at large might not give women their proper due as they went about their humble and unseen duties, but women authors did see and were determined to fill in the gap and to provide the necessary justification, encouragement, and praise for daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers.[9] By openly allying themselves and their sisters in the faith with the humble and suffering mothers, these writers assured that, while perhaps still humble, they were not completely unknown and unacknowledged.[10]

LDS women writers employed flower and nature symbolism to create an extended and complex answer to what they felt was the need for increased public acknowledgement of women's home-centered roles and duties. This was a loose, informal, and incremental theological argument, rather than a formalized and straightforward theological presentation. Flower and nature symbolism was a kind of popular, theological rationalization for these weighty roles that were, at the same time, hard to grasp and quantify, in contradistinction to the more clear-cut priesthood titles held by men. Just as the beneficial influence that women were supposed to wield was spread throughout all levels and aspects and life, the nature symbolism and "text" that explained and supported that influence was, appropriately, the most fundamental and physically omnipresent fact of human life in the frontier West. It held complete sway over the Mormon community's existence, and its influence and impact was never absent from the day-to-day realities and consciousness of the community. By connecting this female-identified reality with the divine realm, LDS women writers converted their biological and social roles into religious, even divine necessities.

MOTHERS AND MEDIATORS OF LIMINALITY

Before going on to outline these arguments and connections in some detail, it is necessary to take a bit of context-creating detour and consider the related roles of women as mothers in the home and mediators of liminality for the community at large. The salvational importance accorded to each role by women authors and church leadership, helps to explain why and how nature and flower imagery was employed in order to validate and explain both of these social and religious functions.

Motherhood was the preeminent role for turn-of-the-century LDS women. Almost all other family or community roles, experiences, and education led up to, were subsidiary to, or originated in the role of motherhood. Women spent most of their adult lives pregnant, nursing, and tending children until those children, in turn, left home in order to start their own

families. Within a year of getting married, most fertile women with fertile husbands became pregnant and, from anecdotal evidence in the sources, most continued to have children every two to four years throughout their fertile years.[11]

The universal assumption throughout the work of LDS female writers is that women will be and, in their intrinsic beings, want to be mothers. In defending the practice of polygamy against internal and external detractors, "Mary F." argues strongly for the importance of motherhood. She writes: "God has implemented in the heart of every true woman a desire to become a wife and mother, and it is her inalienable right. . . ."[12] A more extended treatment of this assumption is spun out in the description of a woman who was unable, apparently not unwilling to fulfill her mission as a mother. In 1882, "Home-spun," the pseudonymous Susa Young Gates, recounts the happy dream of an older and childless woman. The dreamer in the poem joyfully imagines herself in the birth room after the delivery holding the baby in her arms as "her heart-strings thrill and quiver with the love-chords of sweet motherhood." But:

> The vision faded—God pity her!
> And who but they who have felt,
> The passionate wish for a little babe,
> Can know the longing,
> For such a dream to be fulfilled.
>
> But in eternity the bliss of motherhood,
> May be the greater and diviner to those who, in this life
> Have known the emptiness
> The weary loneliness of that world childless.[13]

Though the happy vision dissolves when the childless mother wakes, Gates leaves the reader with the optimistic vision of all women being able to attain the role of mother in the fulfilling afterlife. The afterlife—the Spirit World—was a perfected version of life on earth, as well as a chance to work out all the problems and unfinished issues that were inevitable to mortal life on earth. For these women writers, the Spirit World was not a time of rest, relaxation, and reward, but a period of increased spiritual activity aided by increased spiritual power and knowledge when eventually all faithful would be brought to personal fulfillment and salvation with the final resurrection upon Jesus Christ's second coming. For Gates, the afterlife is the acme of existence for humanity because all existence will be rightly ordered, will allow all to live according to their true natures, and all

will fulfill their places in society and the home—including mothers.[14] Within the work of LDS women writers, the presence of motherhood in the afterlife serves to demonstrate the theologically foundational and eternal character of this role for mortal women. Just as the Mother in Heaven is, in her deepest being, a mother and produces female spirits who are mothers in seed, so when those same spirits return from mortality in a more mature state, they will continue to play out this maternal facet of their nature most likely entered into during their mortality.

This primordial character of motherhood is continually explored and buttressed within the literature of LDS women. For these authors, women hold within their very bodies the transition between preexistence and mortality; they are the physical conduits between the heavenly and earthly realms, the literal gatekeepers and creators of mortality. Speaking more generally of the role and responsibilities of motherhood, frequent male contributor to the *Exponent*, S. W. Richards, describes this linking and nurturing role: "[W]e must say, she constitutes the link that binds father to son, the temporal to the spiritual, the spiritual—the soul of man—to God; consequently, no home on earth or in heaven can be complete in its emotional development and enjoyment without mother."[15] Mothers become vessels of salvation, providing immature souls with the body of mortality necessary for subsequent eternal progression, but also they enter into a dangerous and painful state of liminality experienced and known only to women. In another, later essay, Richards continues to enunciate the crucial role of women in birth and early motherhood:

> The Father chose her by and through whom all his spiritual children should come to earth, and so ordered that she should be the first to know the advent of the spirit to its home, 'a house not made with hands,' and not until she has endowed it with the virtues of her soul does she present it a priceless offering to her Lord. Thus woman is recognized by the eternal decree of the Father to be the first to cherish humanity; as also, she was the first to behold immortality in a risen Son and Saviour.[16]

Babies are the as yet unsullied children of the Father and Mother Gods, and women are the ones privileged to receive and transfer these heavenly souls into the mortal world. Women, both those giving birth and those looking after the mothers giving birth, are literal creators of the bodies and caretakers of souls of new mortals. Because they stand in a close and inexorable relationship with God and the divine realm, they are the ones that make this difficult transition possible. As they were the first to see the resurrected

Jesus Christ, so they are the first to witness the appearance of all spirit children in the midst of mortality.[17]

As has been seen above, mothers were also the shapers of mortal character, the ones who were able to point the young souls in the right or the wrong direction, who either set their child towards the gates of heaven, towards the tortured existence in a limbo state, or, perhaps, the ultimate disaster of eternity in hell.[18] While the warnings about the dire consequences of miseducation and mismanagement in the early years form an ominous background to the literature of LDS women, the flipside of this theme is a more uplifting counterpoint. Writers also present mothers as wielding potentially unlimited and beneficial influence within the community. In a short 1880 essay entitled "Faith," Emmeline B. Wells demonstrates this more positive interpretation of the work of mothers. Wells examines the power of a positive upbringing, comparing its strength to a heavenly revelation that descends at just the right moment.

> Many are the simple lessons of faith in God and his dealings with mankind, learned at the Mother's knee, that have gone with the man out into the great, busy, active world and given him a deep and lasting conviction of the evidences of divinity. In the most trying hour, when all seemed uncertain and unreliable, the mother's careful teachings of the Savior and his blessed promises, have come with refreshing light as from heaven, and imparted courage that could penetrate beyond the dark clouds and reveal a ray, at least, of glowing light beyond.[19]

Mothers have the potential power to form their children for a life of intemperance and futility, but they, equally, have the power to instill an indestructible fundament of strength and faithfulness. A mother's teaching is like the burst of heavenly light on a dark and stormy day. As the backbone of a child's character, this teaching becomes an inextricable part of that child and never leaves, no matter the circumstances.

The praise of mothers is not always so sentimentalized and idealized within the literature of LDS women. In the process of that praise, writers take up the difficulties and realities facing mothers. These difficulties and troubles often serve as the spark for the displeasure of many writers at the perceived invisibility laying over long-suffering and hard-working daughters, sisters, wives, and, especially, mothers. These difficulties also serve to forge the special bond between mothers, and between mothers and God. In 1880, in the poem "To Mother Woodward on Her Seventieth Birthday," Laura C. Pack lauds the perseverance and care demonstrated throughout Mother Woodward's life and claims that it gives her a special, spiritual power, known only to God.

> [O]ther sorrows, more hard to bear;
> It is oft the mother's lot to share;
> And her bitter tears, by anguish wrung,
> Are hidden from every eye but One—
> He who has given her strength to bear
> The grief that another cannot share.[20]

According to Pack, only another mother and God can know the true power, but also the searing trials that mothers must endure in order to care for the physical and spiritual needs of their charges. Paradoxically, mothers are the largest and most visible of secret societies. They have been initiated into partnership with God's creative power. Like Mother Nature, they are his mortal helpmates, but helpmates who do not and cannot fully know his entire plan of action. According to Pack, they must work from a foundation of faith that all will turn out right in the end, if only they adhere to the dictates of God and fulfill their God-given role to the best of their abilities. Motherhood here becomes the kind of exclusive power we see demonstrated within the priesthood, but to an even greater and more excluding degree. As only men could know and fully hold the priesthood, only women could become mothers and understand mothers' troubles, but also their maternal power and authority.[21]

While centered in the home, for LDS women, ideally the role of motherhood also extended outside the home and, therefore, many women became vital participants in the community and church. Most prominently, LDS women worked in the Relief Society to relieve the sufferings of women and children and to act as examples of Christian mercy for the rest of their community—not surprising, since charity was presented as a feminized concept and an important attribute for women to cultivate and demonstrate within their own lives. Relief Society workers were what today we would classify as charity and welfare workers; they were expected to look after the poor and weak of their communities in much the same way that other American women of this time period did in the context of voluntary, benevolent, and church-related organizations.[22] For LDS writers, within the wider community, women were caretakers of the body, as well as the ones who created, through their acts of kindness, the spiritual foundation and union upon which was built the institutional structure of the church. LDS women were encouraged to actively relieve suffering, to try to bridge the gap between the hard realities of life and the ideal, future, and eternal home towards which all aspired. Their aims were both physical and spiritual.

For women, community roles were usually developed within the Relief Society. Though Relief Society leaders from the local to general levels

were authorized by priesthood leaders, often the day-to-day work of the organization was carried out by members on an ad hoc basis: whoever had the time and energy to do the work did it, with those who had an interest or talent in a specific area either falling into or being selected by Relief Society leaders for specific tasks. Most importantly, Relief Society women were expected to manage the times of birth and death. In some communities, a particular woman might be selected to decorate the meetinghouse for funerals, others might be especially gifted with the needle and, thus, tend to make most of the burial robes for the deceased of the locality.[23] The goals of the Relief Society, the realities of frontier life in a community with a deliberately high birth rate, and the tightly-enclosed and coterminous nature of the LDS Church and society acted to create these distinct but informal practices for LDS women within the Society. Sometimes the midwives and death managers of an area were authorized, blessed, and appointed to their duties by local priesthood leaders, sometimes not. These do not appear to be universal and universally agreed upon roles and appointments for LDS women within the Relief Society. Rather, the assumption of the community was much more general: women, aiding or aided by the local bishop, would be in charge of the charity functions for their locality—especially as these related to women, children, and the family. In their roles as community midwives and death managers, women stepped in to be comforting forces for their peers. They became for their peers community mothers and mediators of liminality; they negotiated the difficult and liminal times of birth and death.

When they stepped in as mediators of the difficult transitions between preexistence and mortality, and mortality and immortality, women became unseen stabilizing forces on a cosmological scale. The literal theology of Mormonism suggested that these transitions between "estates" were real and were paramount to the individual's journey toward ultimate godhood and salvation. One memorializing poet describes the two parallel portals in and out of mortality: "Mysterious birth entrance to death and pain,/ Mysterious death, portal to life again."[24] According to this logic, women in their roles as mothers and as guardians and caretakers of the body at the beginnings and ends of lives become assisters in the physically literal spiritual advancement of members of their community. A local Relief Society president, then, can argue through the combined use of scripture and the common experience of women's home and community care, that women stand on equal ground with their priest husbands and that LDS theology raised women to their rightful positions and prominence:

> Woman's position will be advanced from this time; our Savior talked with Eve and also with Sarah and Mary. Joseph [Smith] revealed the

> doctrine that we had a mother in heaven. Christ first appeared to woman after his Crucifixion that shows how she was viewed by him. Woman is entitled to be equal with man, every key of the priesthood that man has, woman can enjoy with her husband, *women are our first and last friends,* we could not do without them, we go side by side. . . . (Italics added.)[25]

Women as mothers become the literal conduit for spirit children as they enter the world. Women as mediators of liminality stand ready to welcome newcomers into the world, while these same women are also the last ones to send departing mortals to a higher and happier eternal life. For these writers, women are the first and last, the angelic gatekeepers too often underestimated and neglected by the world in general, but ready to rise to their rightful place within the context of the restoration of the true church.

And yet, precisely because they are liminal, transitional beings, women are also, paradoxically, the most stable and trustworthy of mortals. As demonstrated in the logic of nature and flower theology, LDS women have in their innermost being the stuff that is closest to the substance of heaven and eternity. Their roles as mothers and mediators of liminality make perfect sense in that, as carriers of a bit of heaven on earth, they would be best able to withstand the enormous, superhuman power and glory that was released during these times of transition, anxiety, and even danger when the veil between mortality and immortality was opened. LDS women writers hold up motherhood, and the closely related function of mediator of liminality as keys to a healthy, productive, and religious society. In this vision, women become the earthly partners and co-workers of God: the literal conduits of spirit children to mortality, the first to greet these children to their earthly estate, the ones to set these children on the right or wrong path, and the last to assist these maturing souls back to the higher realms of existence. Just as Mother Nature is the proof of God's existence in the natural world, so mothers become within human society God's quiet, often unseen, but always present representatives of his laws and purposes.

GARDEN-SURROUNDED, MOTHER-CENTERED HOMES: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF ZION

LDS women did not simply make unsubstantiated claims about the vitality of motherhood and women's community work, they also presented these claims as indisputable facts, observed in the surrounding landscape. The symbol and image of the garden was the crucial literary, theological trope

that LDS women writers used to validate motherhood, home, and female-identified community work.

As did also mainstream writers such as the Goodales or contributors to the *Ladies Repository,* LDS women writers link the concept of sacred motherhood with the concept of the home and home life. For LDS women writers, there can be neither one without the other and, therefore, motherhood and the home become an inextricable symbolic and theological pairing. The mother is the one who carefully cultivates and looks after the home as a place that will nourish her family and instill in them correct principles and behavior.

For LDS women writers, the mother is the gardener who tills the soil of the home and then nurtures the young plants that sprout from the home soil. In an 1881 essay, Emmeline B. Wells compares child-raising to tending a fertile field. She advises her readers: "Much, everything we may say, depends upon beginning right, otherwise one must eventually go over the ground again and it is always more difficult to root up and destroy that which has been thoroughly impregnated in the native soil and plant anew, then to cultivate the spontaneous growth."[26] For Wells and most other LDS women writers, the moral characters of children are formed by the mother, and, more importantly, that moral or immoral character then has an enormous impact on whether the child will achieve a happy or unhappy life in eternity. Extending the garden metaphor to include this line of thinking, Wells writes:

> If the principles of our lives are vital they will bear exceeding rich fruit, if they bear no fruit then they are not vital, they are superficial and worthless. The object of our being here upon the earth is for a purpose; through the spiritual training we receive, we comprehend more fully the glorious destiny marked out for the Saint of God, and the way by which one may attain to that possible exaltation.[27]

Mothers are the first line of defense in the battle against worldliness and unfaithfulness. Mothers are the sowers of seeds and the tenders of young, human sprouts; they are the gardeners of home and family life who make sure that their charges will blossom in eternity.

This analogy of the gardener is important because, with it, the writers emphasize the much wider responsibility that women have as homemakers and mothers—they are in charge of the totality of the physical and spiritual lives of their homes. Child rearing is the central goal, but, in order to raise children successfully, the home environment itself must be carefully tended. Within the literature of LDS women, the home as the nourisher of the family,

and specifically of young children, is often configured as a fertile and nurturing garden. "Camelia" (Annie Wells Cannon) in "Home Influence," draws the common connection between a good home life and good children, by again using the analogy of agricultural "cultivation."[28] Both the physical and spiritual aspects of the home environment serve as helps or hindrances to the mother's role as former of her children's essential characters. The mother is the central figure, but the surroundings she creates through her physical work and spiritual, emotional influence are almost equally important. The physical, visual aspects of the home will have an enormous impact on the inhabitants.

Evidencing this line of thought, LDS women writers describe the physical environment of the nourishing home as a beautiful and immaculately tended garden. In the literature, a visually beautiful home serves to symbolize the unseen, beneficial influences working within the home. In an article arguing for home as the true and proper sphere for women (and written in reaction to the advocacy for women's rights and privileges in the public sphere), the author describes in idyllic detail the perfectly balanced and established home centered around a women devoted to her children and husband. The first textual glimpse the reader has of the home serves to create an image of natural, Edenic bliss and transcendence.

> See that pretty cottage partly concealed with roses, honeysuckle and sweet briar; note the nice graveled walk leading to the house, the tastily arranged beds of flower, the very air is filled with the perfume of the sweet-scented beauties of nature; list to the merry choristers, as they flit from tree to tree; how homelike and beautiful everything appears. [29]

In an essay describing an imaginary trip to a Mormon home, the inherent virtue and spiritual productivity of a bishop's home is likewise manifested in the bountiful and beautiful gardens surrounding it. The same author, M. Elizabeth Little, describes in detail the outside appearance of the home, a foreshadowing of the happy and faithful lives lived within it. Little emphasizes the garden greenery surrounding this bishop's home: "There's a beautiful lawn; fragrant flowers are dotted here and there, outlined by shrubs and ferns of various hues and shades, seeming to vie in their efforts for beauty and colors [with?] their more refined and delicate neighbors, the posies."[30] The house itself is covered in roses, honeysuckle, and jessamine. Just as a virtuous and beautiful woman is compared to a flower or other aspects of beneficial nature, a good woman's "natural" province, the virtuous, happy, and faithful home is similarly designated, in the literature of LDS women, as an Edenic bower of flowers and greenery. For these writers,

home should be closely akin to the pre-Fall home of Adam and Eve. The cultivated, thriving nature surrounding these homes indicates the presence of the heavenly-mandated model of family life with the mother in the center as the literal and symbolic gardener of the home and family.

Within the literature of LDS women, it is precisely this connection between nature, garden, and the home that serves as a trigger for idyllic memories and nostalgia about the home. The garden becomes both a literary and experiential symbolic marker of the home. When the childhood home of Annie Wells Cannon is sold, her sad reminiscences focus not so much on the inside of the home, or even the inhabitants, but on the happy times spent in the garden. She is filled with "agony and despair" as she wanders through the now wild garden and remembers the joys and sorrows played out under the "dear loved orchard trees" where she and her sisters grew from children to maidens to women.[31] The garden looms large in Cannon's mind as a powerful metaphor for her young home life. And, so, it is the garden that Cannon mourns most deeply and addresses as a dying, loved relative: "Oh, the dearest, roughest, tenderest, wildest garden of gardens, are you gone?"[32]

Similarly, when a daughter in exile (presumably because she is a polygamous wife trying to escape federal prosecution) receives a flower token from such a home garden, she is instantly brought back to idyllic and mother-centered memories.

> I've been wishing to see "mother's garden,"
> With a wish that was almost a prayer,
> And to see the dear face that there hovers,
> That to me is so loved and fair;
> So to-day, when she sent me a "posie"
> Of the flowers I love so well,
> It seemed 'twere sent from heaven,
> To break my heart from the spell
> That was weaving itself around me
> With a sombreness, chill and gloom—
> They were faded and almost scentless,
> But they brought a message from home.[33]

The flower here serves as a potent, multi-sensory reminder of garden, of home, and of mother as the central creator, sustainer, and gardener of this home environment. The memories triggered of the comforting mother and the nurturing home garden sustain this daughter through the painful and isolating times of underground polygamy. For one completely cut off from

contact with her mother and home of origin, the highest love and consideration of God is the only possible replacement for these comforting tokens and memories. Because they are part of the secret society of mothers—because they are partners in mortal creation with God—only God himself and other mothers can truly understand and comfort these abandoned, polygamous mothers and wives. In a kind of condensed, natural shorthand, the garden flower with its theological connections to the divine and home realm most effectively provides this comfort.

In the work of LDS women writers, a crucial function of this home-surrounding garden imagery is that it separates cultivated natural elements from wild, uncultivated, and uncontrolled parts of nature.[34] More precisely, garden imagery separates the female-identified benevolent garden-like parts of nature from the usually male-identified destructive elements of nature, and so marks the home as the premier, female realm. As has been seen in the reminiscences of Annie Wells Cannon about her childhood home, the very wildness of the old garden that she walks through symbolizes the death, except in memories, of that home. This connection between cultivated nature, the vital home, and the active, dynamic presence of a mother at the home's center is reinforced by the poem "The Dying House." In this work, T. W. Higginson describes the slow death and subsequent reclaiming of a home by wild nature after the death of the female owner and caretaker. Significantly, the author pictures this process as taking place during the fall, the season of ripeness and maturity, but also the season that carries with it the imminent specter of death, coldness, and difficulty. The only season configured as male, winter seems poised to finally take over this dying female-identified realm of home and garden.

> She is dead; her house is dying:
> Round its long-deserted door,
> From the hillside and the moor,
> Swell the autumn breezes sighing.
> Closer to its windows press
> Pine-tree boughs in mute caress;
> Wind-sown seeds in silence come,
> Root, and grow, and bud, and bloom;
> Year by year, kind Nature's grace
> Wraps and shields her dwelling-place[.][35]

For Higginson, only when the lady of the house captures and controls the potential fertility and abundance of wild nature into the garden does nature becomes the symbol of the happy and helpful female-identified

home.[36] The death of the home is signaled when wild nature reclaims this realm for its own.

Similarly, in *The Women of Mormondom,* the author, Edward M. Tullidge, describes how one of the captains of the United States army was dissuaded from leading his troops in an invasion of Salt Lake City when the women of the city took him to their homes and threatened to destroy them with their own hands if such an invasion took place. Tullidge notes: "The sisters [LDS women] took him into their gardens, and showed him the paradise that their woman-hands would destroy if the invading army came. He was awed by the prospect—his ordinary judgment confounded by such extraordinary examples."[37] For the author and the captain, the amazement stemmed from the insanity of mothers destroying with their own hands the gardens they had so carefully created, the gardens that served as the real and symbolic centers of their lives. According to Tullidge, the captain came to his senses when he realized that the government's actions would force upon the women of the city a kind of extended and material suicide. He saw that he would contribute to the destruction of a city and culture by the very creators of that culture, and this, for him, pushed the limits of absurdity and meaninglessness. He could not participate in this primordial annihilation.

For LDS women writers, the garden serves not only to mark out the home that is well managed and spiritually, morally fertile, but, on a grander scale, the garden serves as a description of the community as a whole. The smaller, physical gardens of the homes come together and make up the entire LDS community. Such a symbolism directly parallels, within LDS literature and within contemporary mainstream literature, the argument for the importance of the home as the foundational institution within society. That the entire LDS community symbolically becomes a garden reflects the importance women felt that they had, or should have, within their sometimes hidden and underrepresented "sphere" of the home and family. In this vision, female-centered homes are the literal building blocks that make up the overarching structure of the LDS community. The smaller gardens together create a naturally idyllic, garden-like Zion.

The presentation of Mormon territory or settlement as a large garden began early on in Mormon literature. LDS writers use the image of a garden—sometimes specifically the Garden of Eden—when they describe the physical and spiritual changes that occurred within the environment when the LDS community took up residence in the land. In a series of articles detailing the old days of the church in Nauvoo, Illinois, when Joseph Smith was still alive, Helen Mar Whitney describes the startling transformation that the small community on the Mississippi River underwent as the LDS community moved in and settled the land. She writes: "[S]oon instead of a

forest the country was dotted over with houses, and gardens and flowers were under cultivation."[38] For another pseudonymous writer, "Hope," from an unknown and swampy, riverside town, Nauvoo quickly became the "Queen of the West" and a magnet for LDS faithful from around the world—a city who in this personified form:

> [H]ad
> Reared her temple grand, and there
> More keys and powers were given—
> While smiling plenty filled the land,
> And still the work rolls on.[39]

In both of these cases, the motivating force for this shift towards fruitfulness and civilization is the true faith and purpose exhibited by the Mormon community. God's chosen people live in God's own land and this collusion then shows in nature and the visibly altered landscape as the wild, destructive, implicitly male elements of nature are tamed and the more benevolent, female-identified aspects come to the fore.

Though proud of the transformation that made Nauvoo the second most populous city in Illinois in the matter of only a few years, LDS women writers are most interested in exploring the transformation of their present land of promise, Utah.[40] As in the descriptions of Nauvoo, they link the literal change from wild to cultivated nature with the manifestation of the innate virtue of the community. These innate virtues are those abstracted, female-identified virtues so important in the symbolic triangle discussed in the last chapter. Pre-Mormon Utah, for instance, is described by the poet Ellen Jakeman as a pitiless, barren, and uninviting wasteland full of unproductive and destructive male-identified natural elements, and waiting for its potential to be discovered. She presents the "voiceless solitude" of a land centered around the unproductive "sea" that communicates "decay accomplished; passionless despair:"

> No bright birds wing stirs all the pulseless air;
> No cloud of promise dots the brazen sky;
> No flowers lift their faces from the earth;
> The sunbeams fall upon the ground to die.
> All is as void, and of as little worth,
> As when God's voice from chaos called the earth.[41]

Jakeman, however, does not stop in this land of no hope, but pushes on to describe the transformation of the land as soon as the feet of "a second

Israel" touch it and as soon as "their great Moses—Brigham Young" pronounces a blessing on the land:

> *Truth,* planted freedom's ensign on the peaks;
> *Faith,* struck the plow deep in the desert's dust
> *Love,* nerved the arm to labor and be strong.
> *God's promises,* kept bright their holy trust;
> *Peace* in their souls made patience sweet and strong,
> *Good will to man,* moved all their hearts to song.
>
> Because for *His* sake, they had borne reproach,
> Nature's rich bosom thrilling over-flowed;
> Milk, honey, wine, replaced the desert waste,
> They reaped abundance where they little sowed.
> Birds sang in rapture; where gaunt wolf stood—
> Was a fair city and a pleasant wood.[42]

When the band of LDS pioneers finally made it to the American "promised land," the land released its hibernating fertility and welcomed them as God's chosen people, ready to supply their every need.[43] The community's innate virtue is described here by means of now familiar abstract concepts (faith, truth, peace, etc.) usually configured as female and also thought to be the virtues and strengths imparted by faithful mothers to their children. These are the qualities that send children down the right or wrong paths of life and that create good members who, in turn, enrich the church and community and, thus, make the land flow with milk and honey.[44] Just as a mother transforms her home into a fruitful familial garden, these female-identified, mother-imparted virtues stand as the foundation of the community's success and stability as these virtues literally and visibly convert wild, untamed, undifferentiated nature into female-identified benevolent, and cultivated gardens, fields, and homes.

When the community transforms the land into a patchwork of garden-surrounded and mother-centered homes, the entire land easily takes on the not uncommon identification of countries and regions as female. While the contrast between the unsettled and the settled Utah is often made by LDS women writers, the majority of the writers focus their attention on these idyllic descriptions of contemporary Utah—they bask in the transformed, transfigured, and female-identified garden of Zion. Like the above virtuous, garden-surrounded homes, for these writers the beauty and the fertility of the land communicate the virtues and faith of the LDS community. In 1883, L. M. Hewlings (sister of Emmeline B. Wells), who lived outside of Utah,

but contributed often to the *Exponent,* conjures up Utah as the stunningly beautiful, queen-like resting place of the hardy Mormon pioneers—a place filled with all the best that benevolent, female-identified nature could offer to a chosen people.

> Fresh in its pristine beauty,
> E'en as Eden seeming fair,
> With the same sweet odors laden,
> Through all the balmy air.
> Most glorious in it gleaming
> Of fruit and flower-bloom;
> While birds of brightest plumage
> With nature join in tune.
> . . . . . .
> Girdled 'round with mighty hills,
> She sits a very Queen;
> Polished by art—glad nature
> Has adorned with living green.[45]

"Beatrice" further emphasizes the beauty and virtue of the land and people of Utah in her description of the territory as a flower-filled and fragrant land. She asks the rhetorical question: "Could there be a more beautiful spot on earth than our own mountain home at the present time?" She quickly answers by noting the fresh, rose-scented, life-giving breezes, as well as the cottages surrounded by honeysuckle and woodbine.[46]

According to these authors, Zion, the modern, American promised land, the queen of the West, is naturally beautiful and flower-filled: a plot made up of happy and productive, garden-surrounded homes filled with virtuous, faithful inhabitants. Mother-centered homes and gardens come together to create one large, female-identified garden of Zion. For LDS women writers, the home and the mother is where all earthly, faithful life begins and they utilize nature and flower imagery in order to give a natural, symbolic, and theological explanation for exactly why this is an indisputable truth.

THE PREEXISTENCE AND THE HEAVENLY AFTERLIFE

The argument did not stop here. LDS women writers further supported the home and the position of the mother within the home by associating the home and the happier, higher realms of being: the preexistence and the afterlife. Garden imagery was the literary tool for making the connections between the home, the preexistence, and the afterlife.

One of the cornerstones of LDS theology was a belief in three stages of existence, three "estates" as they were termed.[47] The first stage of being was in a spirit world of preexistence where God the Father and the Mother or Mothers in Heaven conceived and brought forth spirit children. The second was birth into mortal life. The final stage of mortal life was actually a two-staged step towards eternity. When mortals died they were believed to go back to the Spirit World of their birth, in order to continue their lives and spiritual work on a higher and more perfect plane. But this was not the last phase of eternity. All humanity, whether living or dead, was waiting for the apocalypse to commence and to freeze, in all finality, the cycle of spiritual and physical births on this particular earth. This would occur when Jesus returned to earth and the spirits were reunited with their earthly bodies. The accounts in private and popular public LDS literature are not always consistent. However, squaring with more official pronouncements of LDS theology, the general popular belief seems to have been that after the resurrection and the purifying and perfecting existence of the millennium, worthy believers would go on to live as divine beings on other worlds. In this state they would continue the process of producing spirit children and sending them on their way through the three-phased layers of human existence and, hopefully, towards an eternal and divine existence. This last stage of existence, while not three-phased, was three-tiered with the returning spirits living in varying states of exaltation in the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial levels of the afterlife.

The three-staged cycle of salvation and existence in the afterlife mirrored the idealized three stages of human life—the inexperience of youth (preexistence), the trials of adulthood (mortality), and the wisdom and peace of old age (eternity). We see the power and the cosmological implications of the repeated references to the three-stages of human life by means of various natural cycles: life of a flower, turn of seasons, and even times of the day. For the LDS community, these cycles of nature and cycles of human life also echoed the eternal cycle of existence—they provided concrete proof of the reality of the universal, salvational scheme. These cycles stood as particularly meaningful theological proof for a community that was anchored in the belief of a tripartate, progressive plan, as well as tripartite levels of eternal existence. On this point, mainstream, popular nature and flower imagery helped to reinforce and explicate the LDS cosmological understanding.

We should not be surprised, therefore, that evening, the symbolic double of eternity, was the time that thoughts of eternity and the preexistence came creeping into the consciousness of these writers. In the poem, "Evening Thoughts," while contemplating the night sky and the "glorious

Queen of night," the moon, Lydia D. Alder is brought to a vivid realization of her journey through the three phases of salvation. The reality of the preexistence is emblazoned on her mind and she experiences in her being the vastness and magnificence of the three-part movement towards salvation:

> In which of the shining planets
> Did I have primeval birth?
> And what of the days forgotten
> Before the scenes of earth.
>
> How the throbbing heart beats faster
> And sighs for the far away;
> O, Where are the gorgeous sunsets
> That charmed us yesterday?[48]

Natural elements, in this case a sunset, trigger in Alder an almost physical memory of a happy life gone by, her return to a glorified life in the future, and, in the meantime, the terrible sadness of mortal life on earth. Nature and eternity are symbolic and experiential referents for each other.

Other poetic visions of the first stage of human life are more optimistic and focused on benevolent garden and nature imagery. By employing this nature and flower imagery, LDS writers make explicit the link extending between the immortal, eternal home and the earthly home of childhood. In the LDS consciousness, flowers and nature serve as distant and indistinct echoes of the happy, spirit childhood because that distant, preexistent home was filled with beneficial, beautiful, and benevolent elements of female-identified nature. In 1883, in a letter responding to one of Emmeline B. Wells' raptures on the beauties of nature, old-timer in the church, Joseph Barfoot, explains that such raptures are triggered by the distant and almost hidden memories of Edenic life in the preexistence. He unintentionally gives us explanation for the visceral reaction of Alder to the sunset.

> Dear Sister, I have been made pleased with your pen-pictures of natural objects I love so well; what a fascination there is in gazing, even mentally, on "the old forest," "the moss grown rocks," "the sea—the shells and the corals, gems of the ocean, the ferns and flowers and clinging moss." We love to call up these associations, and with them emotions of the *"auld lang syne"* hinted at in the beautiful verses: "In my first primeval childhood." Our religion is full of poetry of this kind. The "memory of the past" extends indefinately backwards. . . . Then we can realize, dimly, dreamily it may be, something of the past, when we

> dwelt in the presence of our Divine Father and, delightful thought, of our Divine Mother.[49]

The memories of the natural beauties of the preexistence are what motivate the innate attraction of humans to the wonder of the natural world, especially flowers. Shaping the doctrine to his own use, Barfoot here echoes Mormon scripture which claims that earthly nature has a preexistent, spiritual being—that God created all things in heaven before he created them earth.[50] Natural beauty is a shadowy glimpse of the eternal realities and, therefore, natural beauty provides a tangible proof and memory of these garden-filled eternities.

Further, Barfoot believes that the processes of nature and the relationship between nature and humans stimulate and highlight the growth of spiritual knowledge and advancement. The wonders of nature and the realization of why there is an innate recognition by humans of those beauties is, in and of itself, a spiritual lesson and plants a seed that will continue to grow and will lead to greater spiritual understanding. He finishes his letter by commending Wells for her work: "I thank you, my sister, for your kind words, they remind me that I am a Latter-day Saint. What a glorious world you have to sow the seeds of truth—seeds which *never, never die!*"[51] According to Barfoot, seeds of truth grow and are nourished by contemplation of the natural wonders of the world and their more hidden relationship to human beings. Nature acts as a continuous lesson and a continuous motivation for those striving towards the ultimate goal of salvation. As is family life, nature is a crucial, educative element in the school of mortality. Likewise, it expresses some of the mysteries—revealed in the temple ceremonies—of the progressive plan of salvation, but in open, simple terms.

Wells expands on this idea to include garden-surrounded homes in the train of revelatory associations. She argues that nostalgia and love of beauty, home, and youth is rooted not just in the memory of eternal, natural beauties, but also in the vague memory of an ideal, garden-surrounded, preexistent home. The preexistence is filled with benevolent nature, and, like the earthly Zion, is also made up of homes surrounded by benevolent nature nurtured into idealized gardens. Her poetic musings in the following 1888 poem are, therefore, strikingly reminiscent of the nostalgic longings for the homes of mortal youth. The yearning for one's young home life serve as a mortal parallel to and faint echo of the memories of immortal, happy homes.

> I sometimes think I must have lived before,
> In a much brighter fairer world than this;

> That I have stepped from that enchanted shore,
> As though I woke from out a dream of bliss,
> Where soft hands lingered in fond caress
> Upon my head, to soothe me and to bless.[52]

Human beings are purposely born with no memory of their first home—this is a vital part of the testing of mortality—but they carry within them a buried knowledge that they were born into and are heading towards an existence better than the trials and struggles of mortality. For Wells, all have an innate yearning for the higher life and, accompanying this, all hold within themselves an inevitable alienation from the imperfection of earthly life. Nature, love of nature, but also longing for a happier, unremembered home are often the catalysts of memory and evidence for the reality of this preexistence. They confirm the reason for human dissatisfaction and restlessness and they call up the same kind of overwhelming homesickness for the preexistent home as the floral tokens sent from one's childhood home conjure up intense emotions of nostalgia and yearning for that mother-centered, earthly realm. Beautiful, benevolent nature reminds one generally of the preexistence, but also, more specifically, of the physical, garden-surrounded preexistent home on which the earthly home should be modeled in order for earthbound spirit children to return to their true, divine home of origin.

The earthly, mortal home is directly analogous to the heavenly home of preexistence because both are surrounded by uplifting, beautiful, garden-like nature. Nature and flower symbolism links the two levels of existence together in a close relationship, and argues that the two homes are physically and symbolically similar. Both are analogous as sites of nostalgic longing for innocence, purity, safety, and comfort. Both are places where the parents, divine or mortal, saw to all one's needs and (ideally) directed one onto the right pathways of life by example and teaching. Both homes created a sound foundation on which to build and then sent the child off into the mortal world, or the adult world. Both homes and sets of parents are functionally parallel, and, each in its own way, is equally important in the eternal arc of existence—each sending off being crucial to the further development of the young spirit. In this literature, in other words, mother-centered, female-created mortal homes, serve the same weighty, salvational, cosmological function as the preexistent homes in the divine Spirit World. LDS women writers justify and exalt the importance of motherhood by showing how motherhood and home share the same function as the experience of preexistence. Nature and flower imagery is the link and the conclusive proof that the potent combination of motherhood and the home create

a divine realm on earth and in miniature, a realm functionally and essentially similar to the preexistent, heavenly home.

More often than they associate the earthly home and preexistence, LDS women writers conflate the earthly home and the future, heavenly home. The future, heavenly home was, of course, also the first and primordial spirit home that had to be abandoned by all spirit children in order to achieve spiritual advancement and eternal existence. For LDS women writers, even a looking back towards the spirit home of preexistence is actually a looking forward, a hopeful projection into a time when all problems would be resolved and existence would become an eternal, spiritual sweetness. Within the literature of LDS women, though one can never truly return to and recapture the seemingly idyllic home of one's mortal youth, most importantly, one can return to that original and highest home of heavenly youth. Even when referring to the preexistence, these writers—at some level—are optimistically describing where they will end up, rather than where they have been.

LDS women writers utilize flower and nature symbolism as the crucial linking and, at the same time, differentiating element between the mortal home and the future, heavenly home. The writers make clear that the afterlife is a place of great happiness, peace, and eternity by describing heaven as the same kind of idyllic existence that is used to present the home of youth, as well as the gardens of the preexistence. However, this is not a garden of flowers that has to be abandoned for mortality, or that will die at the end of the season, or become a waste when the family abandons the home. The major symbolic signifier of the afterlife is the description of heavenly gardens filled with never-dying nature and, specifically, ever-blooming flowers.

Following the logic of this nature and flower imagery, we can see that in the afterlife, the changes of nature and the turn of the seasons would no longer be necessary to teach the reality of God's promise or demonstrate the reality of the three-tiered stages of existence. In a perfect world, nature no longer needs to act as revelation or scripture. For these writers, eternal happiness inherently means no more changes, no more deaths, no more heart-wrenching sorrows like the loss of a child. The immutability of eternal flowers signals to the reader that all natural cycles have frozen, that sorrowful change and death have been transcended. The following bit of verse dedicated to the memory of a little girl is a typical example of the oft-repeated description of an eternally blooming garden of heaven.

> Darling Winnie! she sleeps not in the tomb,
> And though we miss her sadly, yet we know

She lives, where flow'rs immortal ever bloom,
And where there's no more sorrow, pain or woe.[53]

For these writers, heaven, like the preexistence, is the idealized, safe, and nurturing home of childhood enlarged and perfected.[54] But, in addition, heavenly, changeless nature and ever-blooming flowers indicate a static happiness and limbo state that will, at some point, overtake the whole earth during the millennium. This is a universal freeze frame that, ironically, marks the last and most momentous change in the arc of existence, when those worthy will attain to their own worlds, create their own divine homes and gardens of happiness, and restart the cycle of change, once again.

Talking about the flowers and gardens of heaven in her journals, Jane Kartchner Morris emphasizes by means of nature and flower imagery the link and the divide between earthly, mother-centered homes and perfected, nature-filled heaven. In this poem, Morris steps away from the mainstream interpretations of nature and flower imagery and shows that LDS women adapted this imagery to their own, particular Mormon point of view—a point of view in which heaven existed as a literal and physical place that was a perfected and pure version of life on earth. In an undated poem entitled, "Things Worthwhile," Morris recounts a vision of heaven where the only activity is pleasant work in the garden and time to enjoy nature. This poem confirms by means of a heavenly model the importance of the meditative, mystical rapture with nature already noted as a foundation of the efficacy of nature and flower imagery. The actual experience of revelatory encounters with earthly nature give the experiencer a taste of what day-to-day life will be like in heaven. For Morris, existence in the afterlife is one long communication with beautiful and benevolent, changeless nature:

I've often wondered if in the next world
Into some steamy kitchen we may be hurled
To bake pies and puddings, salads and cakes
With all the fussing, flurry and worry it takes.

I'd wish there'd be time to dig in the earth
To rejoice with the brook in its babbling myrth,
To grow flowers and fruits and beautiful trees
With the touch on your brow of the cool summer breeze.

To basque in gardens made by your own hands
Or take flying trips to the oceans strands

> Or pause to listen to the music of the bird and bee
> Oh! that would seem much more like heaven to me.[55]

Morris is not sure in her poetic vision of heaven, but she is hopeful that the tedious, necessary cycles of daily housework will stop and all will be able to indulge in innocent, natural pleasures: listening to the birds and ocean, enjoying the eternal wilderness. The difficult aspects of life on earth will cease and the eternal beauties of nature will fill the void. Flower and garden imagery acts as a pivotal signal of this radical and decisive shift to the first stage toward ultimate sanctification.

In order to further understand the particular impact of garden and paradise imagery within LDS culture, we should also consider the meaning and symbolism of the temple and temple ceremonies, and, most importantly, the physical presentation of the temple.[56] On a symbolic level, temples were the architectural equivalents of liminal, Mormon women and their homes. Temples were conceived of as places on earth that were transitional points between heaven and earth. Very commonly, LDS women writers will describe the temple itself as a taste of the eternal, a building in which heaven dwells on earth. During a meeting of the Sanpete Stake Relief Society, general Relief Society president, Zina D. H. Young noted: "The Temple is the place wherein you will be blessed and held in safety. It as a foretaste, or a portion of Heaven when we can meet together and enjoy the spirit and each others society."[57] More often, though, the temple becomes a meeting place between heaven and earth, a building of transition and liminality, and a place where the veil, very literally, exists between heaven and earth and can occasionally be lifted. Minerva W. Snow, the wife of church prophet and president, Lorenzo Snow, talked about her uplifting experiences in the temple and described how the world of the heavenly realm was coming closer to breaking through within the sacred precincts of the temple: "In my labors in the Temple I feel I am as near my Father as I can get, at times I feel that our dear ones who have passed away are very near us. . . . When I leave the Temple and come to this City I feel as though I was in another world. . . ."[58] Like the revelatory communions with nature, for Snow, a visit to the temple allows a brief glimpse and confirmation of the reality of the eternal realm. In the temple, in fact, the eternal and divine is so present for Snow that she feels an unpleasant shock to the system when she reenters the reality of the city. She has experienced another plane of understanding, but, for the time being, must continue to exist in the reality of mortality.

Given the function of these buildings, it is not surprising that Snow and others felt a close connection to heaven in the temples of the church.

And it is also not surprising that the rooms within which these rituals took place visually depicted its connection to paradise and heaven by means of nature and garden imagery. During the Endowment ceremonies, in a kind of sacred theater, faithful members were shown how the plan of salvation was instituted and continued throughout the ages. They moved through a series of rooms that symbolized the relationship between the human race and the divine, as well as the progression of the individual soul toward the celestial realm.

Participants seem to have started out in a room decorated to represent the idyllic first creation, and they ended up in a room representing the celestial realm. As revealed in photographs of the Salt Lake Temple taken in 1911 and released by the church, the walls of the Garden Room—representing the Garden of Eden—and the World Room are painted to represent nature in its perfected form (Garden Room), as well as its "fallen," more ambiguous state (World Room).[59] While the Garden Room presents vistas of female-identified, benevolent nature, the World Room shows mixed beneficial and destructive, male-identified natural elements through a panorama of the changing seasons—seasons that represent the suffering and changes of mortal existence, but also the promise of the eternal summertime of heaven. As can be witnessed firsthand during pre-dedication tours of LDS temples, today the Celestial Rooms of temples are furnished in white and sparkling decor in order to symbolize the highest level of existence. But in earlier days, specifically around the turn of the twentieth century, the Celestial Room in at least one temple was apparently created to represent a heavenly garden complete with a flowing fountain.[60] Here in the architectural representation of heaven on earth, paradise was visually presented as a garden full of the elements of beneficial and benevolent female-identified nature. Women writers conceived of a garden-like heaven from within a definite LDS set of beliefs—beliefs that were explicated on the very walls of the temple and during the ceremony that revealed to participants the true structure the world and salvation.

In the LDS, literal conception of heaven as a garden filled with undying, female-identified elements of nature, the garden-surrounded, mother-centered earthly homes of the LDS community become not just models of the preexistent home of distant memory, they become tangible harbingers of an ideal future eternity. The earthly, home garden, constantly in flux, is the ultimate reminder that some day nature will freeze for infinity in a moment of perfection and bliss. Writers suggest that the mother-centered home is the closest parallel on earth to the highest realms of heaven. As S.W. Richards notes: "It has been said the three dearest words in our language are Mother, Home, and Heaven. . . . Mother is first, from the simple

fact that there can neither be home nor heaven in their completeness without mother."[61] Carrying about themselves the visual and material connection with heaven, mothers and garden-surrounded, mother-tended homes become the proof and the hope pointing to this universal freeze frame. Mothers and the home are not simply called the links and conduits between heaven and earth, these theological realities are portrayed as being part of the very structure of the natural universe recapitulated on both the mortal and eternal planes of existence. Through these associations, the combined role of mother, wife, and even housekeeper come to be seen as that of vital creator and nurturer of spirit children in their perilous, yet crucial journey through mortal life. By making these theological connections by means of nature and flower imagery, LDS women writers argue that motherhood is an authentically natural, divine, and spiritual position within the LDS community. Nature symbolism serves to explain, validate, and celebrate the female roles of mothers and community caretakers. Women in American and LDS culture may well have been closely associated with nature because of their biological and social roles as mothers and nurturers—as Ortner suggests occurs on a more universal level, across cultures. But LDS women writers further deepened and essentialized these "natural" roles and identifications to a point of vital cosmological, theological reality, by closely associating nature with motherhood, femaleness, and the divine. For these writers, women associated with nature become women associated with God and the divine realm. Biological and social realities became divine appointment based in the most basic natural and divine laws of the universe.

Chapter Six

Suffering Women and the Theodicy of Nature and Flower Imagery

> [O]f trial, sorrow, persecution sore,
> Full share had she, yet bravely stood the test,
> Of battles quiet fought she gave no sign.
> Brave conqueror thou well hast earned thy rest.[1]

LDS women authors used nature and flower imagery in order to argue that femaleness and women were "naturally" part of the divine plan and that their roles as mothers were extensions of this divine reality. The strength, power, and acceptance of this symbolic, theological imagery, however, extended to another level of meaning. LDS women poets and authors used nature and flower imagery to describe and explore the most vital question recurrent in their lives and literature—suffering. Suffering was believed to be a crucial experience on the road to salvation, as well as an essential part of the roles of mother and mediator of liminality. It was an integral element of the abstract being of femaleness and an ideal to be achieved within women's lives.

In this belief, LDS women followed the gendered assumptions of wider, nineteenth-century American culture, but with their own Mormon twist to it. Mainstream "culture of flower" poets argued that women should follow the example of Christ-like suffering in their lives—should be dying but ultimately resilient and triumphant flowers. Scholars Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins note that, more generally, the sentimental literature of the nineteenth century adulated women's unseen suffering and submission as necessary and redemptive for women personally, but also for society at large.[2] This worldview encouraged women to live within their limited,

home sphere, but save these smaller home worlds with their internal, spiritual struggle, pain, and loss of self. Tompkins notes: "For them [sentimental writers] the world could be contracted to the dimensions of a closet because it was in the closet that one received the power to save the world."[3] Writing more generally on assumptions about how Victorian women should act, Kathryn Kish Sklar argues: "Self-sacrifice, more than any other concept, informed both the triumphs and tensions of nineteenth-century womanhood. . . ."[4] In Mormon women's literature this same theme predominated but was interpreted within the Mormon phased, progressive, plan of salvation. Nature and flower imagery was employed to demonstrate the special and necessary relationship that women had to suffering and the vital role of suffering within the plan of salvation.

LDS women writers also used nature and flower imagery to ritually, textually erase this suffering by offering moments of release, by showing the necessity of suffering for salvation, as well as by illustrating the ultimate goal which would justify and, at the same time, forever transcend the trials of mortal suffering. For these poets and authors, nature acted as a kind of visible assurance and theodicy for all those questioning the goodness and power of God. As women writers employed nature and flower imagery to create these moments of release, they themselves, in their writing, put into action the belief that the duty of women was not only to suffer, but also to relieve mortal suffering and remind all of the greater eternal realities promised by the resurrection of the faithful. In the act of writing, they attempted to practice what they preached.

In order to see how these arguments work, we must leave nature and flower imagery aside for a little while and first take a short explanatory detour so that we will understand, historically, the place and importance of suffering within the LDS community as a whole, the particular trials that women were confronting at this time, how these trials were interpreted by means of nature and flower imagery, and, finally, the way that, on the scriptural and conceptual level, women and suffering were connected within the literature of LDS women.

THE PROBLEM AND BURDEN OF SUFFERING FOR WOMEN IN THE LDS COMMUNITY

Joseph Smith founded the LDS church as a restoration of the authentic power of the priesthood. According to LDS theology, the priesthood was God's power that was manifest before the existence of the world; it was the power that helped to order the world itself. The LDS community, therefore, viewed itself as the only true, primordial church of Jesus Christ

and a community that brought light and hope to an otherwise dark, dreary, and declining world. From this point of view, Latter-day Saints were just what their name said that they were: members of God's chosen people, a literal race, descendants of those lost tribes of Israel finally reunited in the latter days in order to spread what they viewed as the true message as far and wide as possible.

In the last chapter, we have already seen clear arguments for this chosenness in the poetry describing Utah as Zion, or a latter-day Garden of Eden. This was a common refrain within contemporary LDS literature. In her poem, "The Daughters of Zion," R. M. F. (Ruth May Fox?) takes up this thread as she contemplates the role and future of women in the chosen land and among the chosen people. The poet describes how the women of the Mormon community now live in "a land reserved throughout ages" for God's people—a land where these people "establish His Kingdom and battle for truth:"

> And the land shall be choice, above all other lands;
> When Jesus shall come in His glory
> There'll be nothing therein to hurt or destroy
> The hills and the vales shall be holy.[5]

The Mormon community, especially the female part of that community, stands as the highest exemplar on earth of godly living. The actions of the people will bring about the second coming of Jesus Christ. The earth and nature themselves proclaim the truth of this in the way that the land blossoms forth under the feet of the chosen people. Earth is marked with the reality of the community's special status.

And yet this assumption also stands as one part of an ever-present tension within the literature of turn-of-the-century LDS women. The LDS community was a chosen people, *the* chosen people as revealed through the signs of nature, but they were also a people that, from the point of view of its women authors, endured harsh and unrelenting sorrow and suffering on both the personal and community levels of existence. This is a tension not unique to the LDS community, but obviously one that religious groups—especially Judeo-Christian religious groups—have tried to deal with throughout history. This collision of the belief in chosenness with the reality and inevitability of human trials is one of the most weighed, dissected, discussed, and explained topics within the poetry and literature of LDS women.

Emily Hill Woodmansee highlights and encapsulates this crucial theme of unjust suffering in her poem, "Wherefore and Why." She addresses herself

and her readers with a series of harsh and seemingly unanswerable queries at the same time that she uses Job as a kind of John or Jane Doe representing each anonymous LDS member, but also, perhaps, as a symbol of the LDS community as a whole:

> Why do misfortunes encompass the just?
> Why do they still The Omnipotent trust?
> Why are we smitten? the weary ones cry,
> Show us the reason, the wherefore and why.[6]

Though heavily clothed in the language of enduring faith in God, just below the surface, the question still resonates strongly: How can members of God's chosen people understand and endure what seem to be unjust and unbearable sorrows and trials? What theodicy can fully and satisfactorily answer this question? How can God treat his beloved children with such seeming dismissal?

These questions were especially resonant throughout the early history of Mormonism because of the constant, active opposition that the group awakened among neighbors, friends, and family. As R. Laurence Moore has pointed out, this kind of pressure from the surrounding non-Mormon community was a defining element in shaping the outlook and experience of the LDS community, as that community was gradually pushed across the country from New York to Ohio and Missouri, to Illinois, to the Southwest, and then to diaspora settlements in Canada and Mexico and beyond.[7] This outside opposition was one of the glues that held together a large and diverse group of converts. It gave them a common experience around which to rally. This opposition had profound effects on the self-definition of Mormon members, especially those who expressed the troubles and the hopes of that community—the thinkers and writers. As opposition helped to define the identity of the community, so it also produced a large number of Mormon women writers who examined unjust suffering within their own work.

A clear picture of LDS women's early and long-standing engagement with the question of suffering shows up in a dream, repeated long afterwards, in an 1886 essay written by Emmeline B. Wells during the height of the federal government's campaign against polygamy. An unnamed "sister" had had this dream during her stay in Winter Quarters (on the border of Iowa and Nebraska), a semi-permanent stopping place and settlement for pioneers on their way towards Utah during the 1840s and 1850s. In a scene clearly echoing the difficult trip across the plains, in this dream, the woman was walking on a rough road that often seemed too treacherous to traverse.

Ahead of her and leading the way was Vilate Kimball, first wife of Heber C. Kimball, a very popular early Mormon leader and counselor to Brigham Young. Wells continues with the narrative, a story that tells volumes about the mindset of the LDS pioneers who had recently lost their two highest leaders to a mob, had been pushed out of their hometown Nauvoo, Illinois, and were heading towards an uncertain future on the plains:

> Finally they came to a passage way or aperture in a solid wall, through which it would be necessary to make a very tight squeeze, if even it were possible to get through at all, and the sister [the unnamed dreamer] said to Sister Vilate, "I can't go though there, I would rather go round," but she stood and saw Sister Vilate go through, but remarked, "that it made her bones crack." No doubt it will be a struggle to pass through the narrows, and there are many prophetic minds who seem to think this people have not scarcely reached any part of the narrows, or the severest trial as yet.[8]

Early on, Mormon women understood that suffering and pain were major elements of their lives as faithful members of the chosen people. This feeling, this reality, had sunk so deeply into the consciousnesses of the women of the community that this particular woman dreamt about it in a manner that was profound, meaningful, and moving for herself and her contemporary listeners. Suffering was an easily communicated common denominator among the women of the LDS community. Further, since this dream was repeated many years later by Wells in a published essay, we can see that the meaning of this story remained vital and enduring for LDS women for decades afterwards.[9]

During the period we are examining (1880–1920), many years after the initial persecutions and turmoil of the church's founding, why did these women writers continue to engage with the problem of suffering and in such a similar fashion? Of course, each individual woman had personal demons and personal challenges with which to contend. But, as revealed in their public and private literature of this period, LDS women as a group also lived through certain common experiences which tapped into the already present tendency to seek identity through communal experiences of persecution and suffering and, thus, shaped a common literary consciousness. At the turn of the century and even into the twentieth century, the practice of polygamy and the death of loved ones, especially children, were two major catalysts that appear in the literature of Mormon women as issues which continually challenged the understanding of a chosen people living under the protection of a wholly good God. These were the issues

around which LDS women authors and poets tried to form a coherent, compelling, and comforting theodicy through the use of nature imagery.

Scholars such as Lawrence Foster, Richard Van Wagoner, Todd Compton, and Kathryn Daynes have explored LDS polygamy as it was practiced from when Joseph Smith introduced it in the 1840s until the present time in which fundamentalist Mormon sects continue to openly live in plural marriages. Though they each ask rather different questions about the marriage practice, all these scholars agree that it was usually quite difficult for men and women to live happily or easily within a polygamous family. Compton notes: "It is useless to judge nineteenth-century Mormons by late twentieth-century standards. Both men and women were given an impossible task and failed at it."[10] Practically speaking, the actual, day-to-day practice of polygamy pushed women and men to emotional and physical exhaustion.

These scholars, and contemporary literary sources by women, also confirm that, for a number of reasons, this practice generally weighed heavier on women than on men. Juliaetta Jensen, writing about her mother, Marinda Bateman, as well as her mother's sister wife, Harriet Bateman, notes: "These two women, and there were many like them, bore, by far, the greater burdens of sorrow and suffering, and they bore them with dignity because they believed sincerely and truly that what they were doing was right."[11]

The sources tell of a society and practice that, on the surface at least, gave men more public authority and respect than women and, at the same time, placed great pressure on women to make these relationships work. Annie Clark Tanner, speaking about the practice from the hindsight of many years—and from the experience of both growing up in and marrying into plural families—argues that polygamy was predicated on the assumption that men possessed greater spiritual knowledge when they assumed the power of the priesthood: "It teaches women to honor and obey her husband and to look to him as her lord and master."[12] Tanner went so far as to claim that polygamous marriages were only successful if husbands were given the upper hand in the relationship. This sentiment is echoed by Martha Cragun Cox in her autobiography, though with a much more positive gloss, when she notes that she had a difficult time adapting to her life in a polygamous household because of the strict order and rules of the house, "the main rule being perfect obedience."[13] Perhaps most illuminating, though, is the advice that one of Cox's sister wives gave when Cox was making the transition to living in a polygamous household. The wife counseled Cox: "Whenever my heart comes between me and my Father's work it will have to break. And if you have not learned that lesson the

sooner you learn it the better for you."[14] This disarming statement succinctly sums up the words of countless plural wives and husbands who lived out and publicly defended the practice, but also quietly recorded in their diaries and journals the heartbreak they endured when a beloved husband brought another wife home, when previous wives rejected and actively or subtly worked against subsequent marriages, or when economic difficulties overtook a plural family and forced each branch to fend for itself.

The joys and pains associated with the actual practice of plural marriage were usually rather private and confined to the immediate family, or even to the individual himself or herself. At most, scholars such as Van Wagoner have noted, no more than twenty to forty percent of the LDS population at any one time were living in plural marriage and, therefore, its impact would seem limited.[15] However, starting with the Morrill Act in 1862 and culminating with the Edmunds-Tucker Bill in 1887, the federal government began to aggressively pass laws that outlawed the practice of plural marriage and put into place harsh penalties for those caught living in polygamous families. Sarah Barringer Gordon calls this governmental opposition a "second reconstruction" in which federal power continued to eclipse states' rights, but also a movement that allowed anti-polygamists to enshrine Protestant beliefs and practices in law and legal precedent even as they argued that they were enhancing the separation of church and state.[16] The Edmunds-Tucker law represented the culmination of this campaign and, ultimately, forced the church to officially end the practice in 1890. Among other actions, the law disenfranchised all women (who had had the vote in Utah since 1870), forced plural wives to testify against their husbands in the trials, and seized all church property valued at over fifty thousand dollars, thus effectively taking over and shutting down all LDS temples, the very centers of religious life and ritual for the community.[17] So, though only a minority of the community actually lived in plural marriages, the entire community felt the consequences of the federal take-over of the state, and the entire community bitterly resented this governmental interference. When the government stepped in to halt the practice, the troubles and sufferings surrounding polygamy greatly intensified and also became general and public.

As revealed in both the public and private sources, the effects of the "Raid" experiences—the Mormon moniker for this period—were long lasting for all of those involved in the events. In the writings of LDS women produced in the 1880s, the troubles caused by polygamy and the persecution of polygamy are a constant and dark presence. As just one example, polygamous wife Florence R. Dean had a baby in 1886, but the baby, Mildred,

died at around seven months old when Florence was hiding in the network of Mormon safe houses called the "underground" and her husband, Harry, was in prison. Because Florence was in hiding and could not reveal that she had had a baby by Harry, Mildred was, "buried under an assumed name and in a strange grave, tho' she was afterwards taken up and buried in her fathers burial lot and in her own name among her little brothers and sisters."[18] In the year after Mildred's death, Dean, pregnant again with her second child, traveled to and lived in Hawaii with her missionary husband, presumably to escape more prosecution from federal officials. Here, she continually mourned the death of her child; for a while, she even remembered the monthly anniversaries of her death.[19] Harry's frequent and extended missionary absences recapitulated his absences during the lonely days of the "underground" and added to her lingering sadness over the experience. In her missionary diary, Dean records "Mine," an uncredited poem, very likely by herself, about the devastation following a child's death. Within the poem, a dialogue develops about who has rightful ownership of the child, or "treasure," the mother (Dean?), apparently alone by the side of the child's deathbed, or God, the "Master."

I closely held within my arms
A jewel rare:
Never had one so rich and pure
Engaged my care.
'Twas mine: who else could care for it
So tenderly?

But the dear Master came one day
My jem to take.
"I cannot let it go," I cried:
"My heart would break,"
Nay, but the Master comes for it
To bear above,
To deck his royal diadem—
He comes in love.[20]

As reflected in this poem of mourning and devastated protest, and as reflected more generally in the poetry and literature of the time, the 1880s and the 1890s were particularly difficult years for the women of the LDS community as they dealt with the long-lasting and wide-extending effects of the community's determination to live in and defend plural marriage, and the federal government's equally adamant campaign to put an end to the

practice.[21] This clash produced ever-widening waves of unexpected effects in the lives of LDS women and men. Dean even lived her protected life in Hawaii beneath the shadow of this clash. If suffering is a constant theme in the literature of LDS women at this time, the practice of and prosecution against polygamy is one of the most important and causal subtexts to this theme of suffering.

These two above verses, poetically revealing the difficulties of the "Raid" period, also clearly memorialize, mourn, explain, and rail against a child's death. They represent an entire sub-genre of poetry by LDS women and demonstrate one of the other main causes of baffling suffering that engaged the women writers of this period. Along with the trials of life in polygamy and the hardships brought about by the campaign against polygamy, for LDS women even more devastating and even more common, was the high rate of infant and child death within frontier LDS families. A small but influential class of Mormon women doctors practiced medicine and trained innumerable midwives and nurses to counteract this trend. But physicians, such as Dr. Ellis R. Shipp, Dr. Romania B. Pratt, Dr. Margaret Roberts, could not completely stop the, from modern perspective, shockingly common deaths of infants, children, and mothers.

At this time, many LDS women lost at least one child—oftentimes, a number of children.[22] Each one of these deaths took an enormous emotional and psychic toll on the parents, and this toll was very clearly expressed by Mormon women. Florence Dean was not unusual in remembering and recording the anniversaries of her dead baby's birth and/or death—this was, in fact, commonplace practice for women who wrote diaries and journals. Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, for example, never forgot the death of her second son. Five years after the fact, she noted in her journal: "thiss day I shall always remember my little second son was born on the 4th of May, he would of been 5 years old today."[23] Twenty years later, Hindley could still not forget the death of her son—it became an ever-present part of her life, incorporated into even her daily observations on the weather: "25 years since my Baby died, we are having terrable cold weather with lots of snow."[24] No matter how many other children women had, they always remembered and mourned the ones they had lost too soon. Tearing apart the web of family relations, these deaths shaped LDS mothers in lasting and profound ways. The publicly consumed poetry of Mormon women articulately reveals the impact of these deaths. In these poems, the authors not only express their sorrow in poetic fashion, they also seek to work out the unanswerable question of why in order to salve the continuing sorrow of such deaths. Lu Dalton, for instance, in "The One Doubt," ponders whether her dead son is really

in heaven as one of God's chosen, or whether he was simply a random casualty of disease.[25] She assures herself that if she knew for sure that God "took my child, of free and gracious will," she would be able to abandon her grief for a son gone to a better, higher existence. But Dalton fears that "he untimely went," and, for this reason, she is wracked with uncertainty and poetically bemoans: "Ah me! 'twixt faith and fear the strife around this dreadful doubt!" In a subsequent issue of the *Exponent,* Eliza E. Gibbs took it upon herself to gently chide Dalton for her doubts and to offer the traditional comfort of a son already pure, saved, and living in heaven.

> The veil so closely drawn 'twixt Heaven and earth is just and wise
> Obscuring undefiled the visions of Eternity from our unhallowed eyes.
> Oh why should finite mortals doubt the infinite wisdom of our God?
> Whose Son hath all our sorrows borned, life's stormy path has trod,
> Has gained the victory over death and drained the bitter dregs.[26]

This interplay between doubt and assurance, sorrow and hope, is a constant and vacillating dynamic in the memorial and death poetry of LDS women. The poetry demonstrates the inevitable, and never-ending process of questioning and reassurance that occurred after a child's death, not a final, joyful resolution and understanding. In this vacillation, we catch a glimpse of the profound sorrow that such deaths inevitably created in the mourning parents.

These pressures—disruptions caused by polygamy and the all-too-frequent deaths of loved ones—highlighted the question of the purpose of suffering among God's chosen people because they were produced or exacerbated by the very family, marriage, and birth practices which these LDS women saw as vital to a true salvation. The same practices that marked them out as a chosen and peculiar people were the practices that marked them out as a suffering people. Polygamy was the marriage and family structure which would allow all to advance on to higher, eternal realms: Why was it so incredibly painful to those stalwart faithful who chose to enter into the holy practice? Children were purely innocent souls sent directly from the halls of heaven in order to enrich both mortal and eternal family life: Why did they die such early and painful deaths? Why were the family and the home, at the very core of the life of God's chosen people, so often shattered and blasted in a universe in which this good, merciful God supposedly reigned supreme? What was the logic to this and how could it be supported?

One answer to the above series of questions is to assure all that divine justice would be swift and merciful: that all wrongs will be made right in

the lifetime of the sufferers and God will punish the crimes committed against his people. In her poem, "Retribution," Jeanette Patton describes the devastation resulting from prosecution by government officials who she depicts as "fiends incarnate" preying on innocent women and children. For Patton, the federal laws and prosecutions punishing polygamy returned the land of Zion to a wasteland, uninhabitable and forbidding for God's chosen people. Where before wolves and "red men" ruled in the pre-Mormon wilderness, now despots and fiends ran amok and heartlessly persecuted the women and children of the Mormon community. The central support of the community, the family and marriage structure was threatened from the outside. But, in the end, she reassures herself and her readers of God's justice:

> A day of retribution yet
> Upon their hardened hearts will fall;
> For them a judgment will be set,
> And soon upon the rocks they'll call
> To hide them from the face of Him
> Who comes in glory, power and might,
> To smite the wicked in their sin,
> And put His enemies to flight.[27]

Patton is sure that God will swiftly make these crimes right. The persecutors will learn firsthand the divine wrath at their transgressions against God's people.

LDS women writers of this time period, however, most commonly understand both personal and community suffering by placing this suffering within the overarching plan of salvation and making it a necessary part of the religious journey. As has already been seen above in the quote from Wells, most often, women writers interpret suffering as the mortal test through which the faithful have to successfully progress in order to attain to the highest level of eternal glory. According to this view, these trials were God's method of refinement for mortals. Spirit children in the preexistence knowingly took upon themselves these trials when they chose to enter mortality with the express intention of returning eventually to their divine parents and, ideally, in the end, becoming creators and rulers of worlds of their own. Suffering, in this view, is an intentional and absolutely pivotal part of the entire process of salvation. Suffering is an agent of purification and divinization.

Cementing and emphasizing the importance of suffering in the process of spiritual advancement, within the literature of LDS women, important and highly respected church leaders are portrayed as more spiritually advanced and enlightened than ordinary members because they have

undergone intense testing. Women writers consistently eulogize early leaders and members of the church—Joseph and Hyrum Smith, but also women like Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. H. Young—as excellent role models for the young because of their experiences of troubles and trials. In 1887, Wells published an informal talk that Eliza R. Snow had given at a gathering at the house of Dr. Ellis R. Shipp. In this talk, Eliza R. Snow, the premier role model for LDS women, justifies her own power as being based on her experience of suffering, and she elucidates for her audience why they themselves must undergo this same process. She argues by both living example and carefully chosen words. Wells explains that: "Sister Eliza spoke to the sisters, encouraging them to labors of love and to renewed diligence in the duties devolving upon them, and among other things she congratulated the younger sisters present upon the rich experience they were sure to gain by the present trials of the Latter-day Saints."[28] Snow parallels the contemporary troubles of the younger "sisters" with those of the older women of the church. According to her, the new generation has been given rich opportunity to prove themselves, just as did Snow and all the other first plural wives more than four decades before when polygamy was first discovered by a hostile and disapproving nation. In the mortal world, suffering gave one a special spiritual and social currency. Suffering marked one out as having an especially close relationship with God, and an important part to play in the plan of salvation.

This explanation of suffering as a necessary, even planned part of the purifying and elevating process is widespread throughout the poetry and literature by LDS women; it serves as the supporting assumption of most discussions of salvation, and the relationship between women and the plan of salvation. In the essay, "Thoughts and Reflections," the author (probably Sarah M. Pratt) forthrightly states the case:

> The trials of life are necessary to purify us, and we have got to be tried as gold seven times purified by fire. If we cannot be purified by passing once through the furnace of affliction we have to be thrown in again and again, until we become as the pure gold that is without any alloy, neither spot nor blemish.[29]

Employing the biblical, but also hermetic imagery of the refiner's fire that John L. Brooke has shown is rampant throughout early Mormonism, the author argues that mortal life is made meaningful by means of intense and prolonged suffering.[30] We are reminded of the advice given to Cox that one's heart must break in order to do God's will. This stark statement makes much more sense in the context of a world view that saw suffering as an absolutely necessary part of the process of spiritual advancement.

Likewise, in a poem offering consolation to a friend, Belle, for the death of two children, the author conjures up a similar explanatory image: life as a red-hot furnace that evaporates the mortal dross from humans through a seemingly ruthless process of pain and loss. She also, however, takes the next, logical step and connects this individually-based purifying and expiatory suffering with the more universal trials of Jesus Christ who knowingly died a painful death in order to save his spiritually immature and unformed siblings. Again using the imagery of the refining fire, the poem argues that suffering tests the immortal spirit inherent in this mother and also connects her with the divine incarnation and elder brother in the Spirit World, Jesus Christ.

> God is trying and testing as gold
> In the fire; oh, shrink not, and
> Doubt not His love! Would we
> Share in His glory, we must drink
> The cup that opens that glory to us.
> . . . . . .
> Every pang in your great Sacrifice
> He hath known, and your Cross
> Will entwine with garlands
> Unfading, and weave for your
> Brow the Crown of the Pure in heart.[31]

This experience signals that Belle and Jesus Christ are traveling on the same path and reaching for the same, ultimate destination if Belle, at least on a small scale, undergoes the same earthly troubles and temptations that he underwent.

Indeed, the humble and voluntary endurance by Jesus of indignities and pain make him the premier example for LDS women to follow in their march through mortality—as much as any female scriptural figure such as Eve or Mary. "Ruth" (Ruth May Fox?) expresses and expands on this idea, as she contemplates why the prayers of the faithful do not always seem to be answered quickly or directly by God. She admonishes her readers that, no matter how many friends or family may surround one, all are alone with God and all, therefore, must follow the model of elder brother, Jesus Christ, simply endure to the end, and wait for the better, eternal life. She rhetorically asks the reader if as children of God they can do less than give up their lives for God. There is no easy way:

> The same rough road our Brother trod
> We all must tread. No pattern's given

> Save Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[32]

"Ruth" places a compelling, ultimate meaning upon the suffering that all must inevitably endure. Difficult lives become, in this interpretation, echoes of Jesus Christ's most heroic life, and a necessary "school" in which eternal spirits come to more fully understand and learn God's plan for universal salvation. Suffering is the spur that progressively increases spiritual knowledge. In this view, even the most mundane annoyances hold deep, divine resonance—nothing is without meaning in God's efficient economy of suffering and salvation.

As "Ruth" suggests, women were seen to have a special understanding of and affinity with Jesus Christ. Sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly, LDS women authors argue that the lives of women incarnate the life of Jesus Christ. It is not simply that all members of the LDS church must follow Jesus Christ's example, but also that women, in particular, understand Christ's suffering and, in a small way within their own lives, they must participate in and make more effective this suffering by authentically experiencing and rightly reacting to even mundane trials and tribulations. At the funeral of Catherine Perkes McAllister, one of the eulogizers made this connection:

> She was, like many other women, a sufferer. It seems to me that the apotheosis of woman is through her suffering, and in her destined sorrows she nearest approaches the Son of Man, the greatest of sufferers. His life was the sweetest that was ever lived, yet it was the saddest life the world ever saw. Jesus, the man of sorrows the God-man. And He is approached, I say, more nearly by woman in her sufferings for others, than by anyone else.[33]

In *The Women of Mormondom,* writing in hyperbolic and apologetic fashion, Edward W. Tullidge explains more deeply the connection between the suffering of Jesus Christ and women. For him, the experience of vicarious suffering is what innately links women with Christ. This suffering produces a spiritual, genetic kinship passed from Mary to Jesus so that, though essentially male, he manifests femaleness in his acts of compassion and self-sacrifice—he becomes the perfect combination of femaleness and maleness, the perfect model of the mother-father divine pairing.

> From woman, the love of Jesus for humanity. From her his sympathies for the race. 'Twas she, in her son, who forgave sin; she who bade the sinner go and sin no more; she who wept over Jerusalem as a mother

> weepeth over her young[.] And it was woman, in her son, who died upon the cross for the sins of the world![34]

For Tullidge, women are the ones who, in their humble and every-day sacrifices save the world, just as the feminine part of Jesus Christ inherited from his mother, Mary, prompted him to sacrifice his life for the greater good of humanity. Women and suffering have a close and salvational relationship for these authors. Suffering brings humans, but women, especially, close to their deepest and most divine natures, in this way foreshadowing their ultimate apotheosis in the eternal afterlife.

This leads us back again to the figure of Eve. Because of the LDS understanding of the salvational meaning of the Fall, Eve and her female offspring were scripturally connected with this idea of suffering as a necessary and salvific tool in the plan of salvation. According to the divine plan, but also by her own free choice, Eve set the entire plan of salvation in motion and, in this way, allowed spirit children to enter mortal life and continue on into eternity. Sharing essentialized femaleness with Eve, their earthly mother, contemporary LDS women, could claim a part in this momentous, cosmos-changing decision, the universal suffering that accompanied it, and the particular suffering that Eve was destined to experience for her part in the drama.

The parallel between Eve and Jesus Christ becomes quite close here: Eve suffered for introducing this suffering into the world and Jesus Christ suffered vicariously in order to erase this taint of original sin. According to the logic of the popular theology in LDS women's literature (though not in more formal Mormon theology), it appears that women were somehow exempted from Jesus Christ's vicarious sacrifice and that they had to go on carrying Eve's curse; or, perhaps, by means of their own smaller and unseen suffering, they had to carry forward the energy and meaning of Jesus Christ's one grand sacrifice. In this literature, Eve's and Jesus Christ's sufferings are conflated and lived out by Mormon women in every trifling annoyance, but also in every devastating loss of a loved one.

Christian theologians throughout the ages have pondered the question of suffering in the context of an all-good God. Within mainstream American society, there was current the idea that women, especially, needed to suffer or offer themselves in self-sacrifice for the greater good of family and society. LDS women writers joined these traditions. As with many of the developments within LDS women's literature, these authors took with them these ideas from mainstream cultural and literary streams and adapted them to their own circumstances and their own context. Those who underwent inordinate suffering and self-sacrifice in this life

were thought to be especially pure and close to God, and their reward was to live in high and exalted fashion in the afterlife as a reward for all their earthly troubles. In this view, suffering and self-sacrifice were vital tools of purification and divinization. Women were a key part of this process. They were expected to silently and uncomplainingly fight the battle of life, to accept no glory in mortality, but to look to the promised future for their rewards. As a woman had instituted the plan of salvation on earth, so all LDS women had a responsibility to ease the pathways of humans through this plan. Women and femaleness were inextricably implicated in suffering as a crucial tool of salvation. The eternal rewards were high, and so were the mortal costs.

NATURE AND FLOWER IMAGERY AND THE EXPLORATION AND EXPIATION OF SUFFERING

This special relationship between women and suffering was enhanced when LDS women writers expressed it by using flower and nature imagery. Poets and authors employed flower and nature imagery to describe the pain, inevitability, and necessity of troubles, but they also utilized this imagery so that it became a cyclic and unending erasure of suffering.

In order to begin to explore how all of these arguments are executed and intertwined, we must briefly continue the discussion of Eve and the Fall. Authors and poets use nature imagery to narrate the story of Eve and the Garden of Eden, and to powerfully demonstrate the process whereby suffering and change was introduced into human history.[35] In a 1902 poem entitled "The Legend of the Rose," the author explains that the heretofore white and thorn-less rose became red and full of thorns when the tears of sinning Eve fell upon it.

> And ever since the blood-red roses blow
> In sultry hours, and speak of joys and pain,
> And lovers pause to pluck them as they grow;
> While nightingales chant on their soft refrain.
>
> Perchance at times they feel the piercing thorn,
> Which ever guards the roses stem, 'tis said,
> Since that long vanished hour in Eden's morn,
> When sad Eve kissed the white rose petals red.[36]

Before Eve and Adam ate the fruit, all of nature was as beautiful and benevolent as the thorn-less, white rose. After the Fall, the pains of human life

are not only described, but also largely caused by the transformation of a purely nurturing nature into one fraught with hidden and destructive dangers. These dangers are symbolized by the beautiful red rose that hides its thorns underneath its leaves. At this point in history a chasm opens up between nature and humans, as humans, at the Fall, have to struggle to wrest a living from the heretofore abundant and giving nature. Suffering is introduced into human life, not coincidentally, at the same time that the antagonistic elements of nature are also made manifest to humans. As we have already seen, the polarized elements of nature—the benevolent and the destructive—are the fundamental markers of the second and most crucial, mortal stage of progression through the plan of salvation. Suffering and change, as described by these forces of nature, also become the fundamental markers of human life.

Within the structure of LDS theology, these antagonistic forces of nature, introduced upon the advent of suffering, are then, in turn and logically, used by LDS women authors to describe and examine the troubles of human life. Human pain, suffering, and troubles become winters, storms, deserts, and thorns—the polar opposites of benevolent and beneficent female-identified nature. These storms and deserts are the elements with which female-identified nature must contend and, eventually, overcome in the course of the cycle of the seasons. More concretely, here, these troubles represent what mortal women must overcome each day of their mortal lives whether these troubles are the miniscule and unseen, or the more obvious sorrows caused by polygamy or the death of a child. In "The Sad Message," for instance, L. M. Hewlings draws the parallel between the troubles in her life and barren, destructive nature. Expressing her great sorrow when she hears that her beloved brother is dead, she talks about how the "chilly drops of winter's rain" and "sighing winds" take up the "refrain" of "our troubled hearts."[37] The forbidding elements of nature outwardly voice her doubt and impatience with the reality of mortality. The rain and wind represent the roadblocks and traps on the journey through mortal life. In a similar vein, L. E. W. warns her young readers that, while life looks only hopeful and happy from their naive vantage point, they will encounter and have to overcome many trials along the pathways of life, and that only by this endurance can they attain the highest and most real happiness. She exhorts them:

> Our future home appears in the distance brightened with fresh rays of sunshine very elegantly adorned and all the luxuries of life abound there, the path appears to be strewn with flowers we quicken our pace and hasten. Oh to obtain that long wished for treasure but alas! as our joy is increased our sorrow is multiplied. So remember young friends as

> you proceed on the journey of life, and extend your hand to grasp those roses the pleasures of life, remember that their stems are briery though they may be concealed beneath beautiful leaves.[38]

In both of these cases, personal troubles, trials, and sufferings are directly correlated and compared with the destructive, more often male-identified aspects of nature. The physical hardships of enduring storms, deserts, and thorns easily become descriptions of traumatic and sorrow-filled events. These descriptions were especially meaningful within a pioneer, frontier community in the desert Southwest where nature served as a real barrier to a life of ease and comfort.

As hinted in the second passage quoted above, LDS women writers oftentimes use nature associated with happy youth as a catalyst for realizing the full extent of suffering within adult personal and community life. Within the literature of LDS women, youth and beneficial nature are closely linked with nostalgic memories of carefree and idyllic home life, but these descriptions are often made in conjunction with a definite or implied contrast with the present, more difficult times. In the November 1884 *Woman's Exponent,* an author identified only as "Millicent," juxtaposes the trials of her adult life with the flowers and joys of yesterday's "innocent trust of our childish hearts."

> Have not the garlands that crowned us then
> Faded and fallen apart
> And the flowers that were fairest in bygone years,
> Have they not gathered their dew of tears
> To drop on an aching heart?[39]

Youth is closely and logically equated with springtime and flowers because this is a time of great, yet ephemeral hopes and dreams: youth and the beneficial aspects of nature hold promise and blessings for all those around them.[40] The poet employs the degeneration of flowers and nature to effectively symbolize the death of hopes and dreams upon entrance into the realities of adulthood. The flowers of youth are now withered and covered in tears. This strong contrast between the youthful hopes and the sorrow producing realities of adulthood brings home for the reader the pain of mortal life.

Also importantly, within the context of this literature, both youth and springtime are periods that humans can look back on and enjoy when the more difficult realities of winter and adulthood bring inevitable trials and troubles. This is not simply a metaphorical comparison between youth and

springtime and flowers. This is not simply the use of the seasons as a way of efficiently describing the arc of the cycle of life. Young people are also equated with spring because of a more experiential connection. LDS women poets employed this idealized reckoning and remembrance of childhood in flower-filled fields to evoke in their readers a moment of nostalgia and release by allowing readers an optimistically recreated moment of real happiness. Even in the more private sources by LDS women, youth and flower-picking are closely related. As a child who had moved from the desert southern regions of Utah to the marginally more lush environment of the northern parts of the state, for instance, Anna Griffiths remembered vividly her love of reveling in flowers and greenery.[41] Similarly, in her autobiography, Ellis Coombs recalls that she spent much of her childhood outside using the natural elements as her playthings: squares of sod to make playhouses, flower petals for rugs, and flower, paper, or mud dolls for inhabitants of these miniature domestic spheres.[42] As recorded in these sources, girls really do seem to have spent a portion of their playtime picking and enjoying flowers in the wild. When LDS women authors employed this trope of girls picking flowers, therefore, they aimed to evoke in their contemporary readers a real, albeit glossed and idealized, moment of memory-driven release from adult sufferings and sorrows. Recitation of this trope returned women to an instant, at least, of carefree, idealized girlhood.

This kind of evocative pairing of youth and beneficial nature is demonstrated in a report written in 1880 by Dr. Ellis R. Shipp. At this time, she made a trip south to the land of her youth and, immediately upon entering and seeing the country, was transported back to scenes of her childhood spent outdoors amid the glories of nature. She writes to the *Exponent* readers of the emotions that the mountains and beautiful surroundings evoked:

> Passing still on and glancing to the left, what memories flooded the heart at sight of the hills that rose before us like old familiar friends, not a hill we have not climbed, not a crag nor a cliff we had not scaled, not a dale we left unscanned for the dainty violet, the wild honey suckle, and the sweetest and fairest of flowers—the Lily of the Valley. Today other feet tread the same paths, other hands cull the lovely flowers, while we, thronged with life's cares and burdens, scarce have time for pleasant retrospection.[43]

Just the sight of the familiar, natural landscape—the actual, physical setting of Shipp's childhood—immediately transports her back to her former, flower-picking romps through the springtime wilderness. And though Shipp

presents this as an actual reaction to an actual physical setting and in reference to actual childhood play times, Shipp also very effectively combines these situations in order to highlight the painful realities and troubles of adult life, a time "thronged with life's cares and burdens" in which "we . . . scarce have time for pleasant retrospection." Memories and literary imagery are powerfully combined to describe and comment on the reality of suffering in adult life.[44]

Key here is the moment of remembrance, or memory. In the above examples, the writers highlight the real and tangible character of female-identified memory in the literature of LDS women writers. As noted in the discussion of the symbolic triangle of benevolent nature, femaleness, and abstract concepts, female-identified memory, like women themselves, is seen to act as a link and connector between humans and their earthly and heavenly past. Memory is what binds all humans together with their past, their future, their families, friends, with heaven, with the divine.

Through the vehicle of the literary flower or the soothing glimpses of youth, LDS women writers utilize the abstract character of memory to symbolize and create real comfort and release from the sorrows of mortal life. As a sometimes forthrightly divine revelation, female-identified memory serves as an oasis of pleasure and hope amid troubles and sorrows. Directly equating memories and flowers, "Emile" describes the motivating and comforting function of flowers and memories within the difficulties of human life. She explains how "sweet mem'ries" burn through the cloud of daily troubles and quietly encourage the rememberer to face all trials and, "hope on and bear the burden of to-day." Memories are like the comforting and uplifting scent of flowers—one cannot live without them.

> Yet,—harder still would be our earthly lot,
> If the sweet mem'ries of life's golden hours,—
> The brightest and the best were all forgot,
> The perfume taken from the fairest flowers,
> That bloom along our toilsome, weary way,
> And scatter fragrance round us day by day.[45]

For this poet, memory encompasses much more than just the escape to youthful pleasures, more than simply a moment of mental flower-picking in symbolic fields. Memory is a gift from God that ideally acts as a motivating, restorative release along the journey of life.

Writers are often self-conscious about the fact that their memory pictures are idealized and nostalgic. In an essay on home, L. E. W. notes: "Memory has cast over the pathway a carpet of green and all nature is covered with

beautiful foliage as we look back 'tis grand to behold."[46] This does not seem to have reduced the power of memory. When a moment of imaginary flower picking occurs, memory itself becomes a soothing woman, a perfume-filled flower of idealized love and comfort, an epiphanic, female-identified flash that, for a moment, clears the briars and thorns from the road of life.

Female-identified memory is so powerful because it is the direct link between the present sufferings, the happy preexistence, and the promise of a better and eternal day in the future. Through the instrument of flowers and beneficent nature, memory triggers in human beings a vague recall of their divine origin buried behind the amnesia-producing walls of mortal birth. Throughout this literature, memory as a gift from God, is a real phenomenon that breaks through this barrier, as well as the troubles and loneliness of human existence, and, most importantly, allows the rememberer a wider vision of the panorama of life and the promises of future, eternal life. When nature-driven memory taps into those distant, childhood joys, these mortal memories trigger a release based on these reminiscences, but these memories are seen to refer and defer—once again—to the more distant and ultimately more real memories of one's spiritual childhood in the pure and flower-filled realms of paradise. In an article by "Hermita," the author describes why memory is so vital to human beings and why it is so close to the realm of the immortals: memory is the vague, revelatory vibration from the previous existence in the flower-filled gardens of the Spirit World. She writes: "Enjoyments in memory have no resort in mysticism, which is only a subterfuge for ideality, invented by evil powers; but ideality, within a sacred sphere, is it recallings from the first estate, vibrating in the soul from the mansions of bliss? We think so."[47] Triggered by past and present experiences of nature, female-identified memory, as a handmaiden of God, acts as an internal, spiritual connection between humans and their true, eternal home. Female-identified memory becomes revelation anthropomorphized.

We can take a step backward and also see that writers, such as Shipp, themselves become agents—prophets even—of this divinized, revelatory memory. They become memory and, therefore, revelation incarnate. By sparking up the flame of memory with their literary work, oftentimes by means of flower and nature imagery, writers aimed to create oases of nature-filled imagination and experience. The symbolic trope of a girl picking flowers reflects and invokes a potentially real moment of childhood. Yet, it also powerfully represents an eternally pure and divine moment of spiritual preexistence that will expand infinitely, if only the reader can endure the trials and troubles that, at that very moment, she is trying to escape from by means of this very trope. This is a trope that works on the mortal level of release and the divine level of eternal promise, and the writers themselves

become deeply implicated as purveyors of these idealized memories and moments of release.

We can see these sets of assumptions about nature, women, memory, and suffering throughout the literature of LDS women. We can, in fact, look just about anywhere in the literature to find all of these arguments at work and have confirmed how widespread they were within the literary and theological consciousness of LDS women. So, for instance, flower-filled youth is not the only vehicle for description of and release from suffering; within the literature of LDS women, even something as mundane as present, happy social gatherings with friends and family reveal the interconnectedness of memories of home and preexistence, self-sacrificing women, and the promise of a future, fruitful afterlife. Contemporary social gatherings, like moments from childhood were what memories were made of—they provided the joyous material for later reflection and sustenance. When LDS women authors present these gatherings in a literary form, they emphasize the importance, reality, and immanence of suffering within mortal life. And, like the descriptions of memory as a soothing, gentle woman, the flower as a tool of comfort, and the identification between women, Eve, and Jesus Christ, these authors reinforce and embody the idea that while enduring these trials to an unusual degree themselves, one of the main jobs of women is to relieve this suffering among others.

As in the above descriptions of memories, these social gatherings are interpreted by LDS women writers as necessary oases in the midst of the humdrum and troubles of life, flowers in the midst of a desert, and a place for rest and refreshment in the present and the future. In an essay written on the occasion of the New Year of 1891, Emmeline B. Wells describes festivities and holidays as emotional respites, and memory as the vehicle for carrying these rest-places to the rememberer at just the right moment of darkness and despair.

> Let it be one of the fresh, green places in our lives towards which, in after years, we may turn with a sense of infinite restfulness, a refuge of peace in moments of pain. . . . Like fragrant flowers along our pathway, whose perfume lingers with us, long after passing, are the blessed holidays, scattered here and there along the road of life, helping to brighten the dreary way; and one of the best of these is New Year's Day.[48]

Likewise, recorded upon the occasion of the annual church Old Folks' excursion and later published in the *Exponent,* third church president John Taylor echoed this theme of social recreation as respite: "He expressed his

pleasure at being present to witness so much happiness; remarked it was proper to pluck as many flowers as possible in the journey of life. . . ."[49]

Prominent Salt Lake City LDS woman's leader, Lillie Freeze, puts the purpose of social gatherings in a more ultimate context by arguing that they serve as little bits of heaven on earth and reminders of what will go on in the eternities. Speaking at the surprise fiftieth birthday party of prominent physician Dr. Romania B. Pratt, Freeze voiced the wish that the memory of the event would "be as a broken fountain of perfume shedding its fragrance adown the stream of life" until all party participants reached "the Celestial Kingdom of our Father" where, reunited, they would rejoice together in perfect happiness.[50] In another report on a social gathering, the author notes: "Such meetings give one something of the idea of the feelings we shall have when we go behind the vail and meet old friends and acquaintances."[51] Like the memories of home or happy childhood, participation in and then the memories of social gatherings, festivities, and holidays serve, not only to rest the body and mind, they also encapsulate and preserve a glimpse of that happiness that all faithful LDS seekers will discover in the afterlife. They are concrete examples and models of the divine life that was in the preexistence and, more importantly, the even more divine life that will be in the afterlife.

These oases of social gatherings—these glimpses of the flower-filled eternal realms—are signaled in the works of LDS women by a number of closely associated and, by now, not surprising elements: flowers and women. Flowers and women instantly signaled the reader that a social gathering was an entertaining, but also a religious affair. Like female-identified, flower-like memory, both of these elements work together to provide soothing, self-sacrificing comfort to all of those around them. So, for instance, when Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. H. Young visited the Relief Society of Manti, Utah, members profusely decorated their meetinghouse with flowers in order to create the optimal, spiritually social gathering.[52] It is no mistake that Emmeline B. Wells emphasizes these flowers in her description of the event. Nor is it surprising that it was women who put up these flowers in celebration. Within the literature of LDS women, the presence of women at a successful social gathering is a given. Women were the prime facilitators of social events for women and children and within the individual families, but also for the community as a whole. They were expected to organize any number of events that ranged from birthday parties, anniversaries of all sorts, holiday dances and festivities, and sometimes even spur of the moment gatherings meant to cheer up a sick, sorrowing, or elderly community member.[53] The assumption behind the assignment of these duties to women is that they could most effectively create a welcoming,

safe, and morally uplifting environment for all who attended. Emmeline B. Wells writing on festivities and the memory of festivities notes, for instance: "No festival or entertainment is ever perfect without woman's help; it is her prerogative to embellish, adorn and beautify, and in all the pictures memory portrays, she is ever a prominent feature."[54] Women, like flowers, serve as the garnish that makes the festivities of the day memorable and appealing. In more practical terms, women apparently were the ones who knew how to most effectively throw a good party.

But flowers and women signal another aspect to this social gatherings. The creation of social gatherings is, according to the logic of LDS women writers, an integral part of women's mission to relieve suffering and uplift family and community members. Even here in moments meant to be recreational, the connection between women and suffering and self-sacrifice reasserts itself. In an 1886 essay on the importance of meeting and communing with old friends, "Lillie" (Lillie Freeze?) explains that this seemingly frivolous and selfish act is really a vital part of supporting and helping others along the difficult road of life.

> We have met, not to enrich ourselves financially—some are weary of this labor, and seek rest—but we all desire to enrich the spirit and satisfy the cravings of our social natures. . . . Therefore, I esteem it a duty we owe to each other—to meet often, not merely with the desire to be entertained—the very thought is born of selfishness, but to entertain, to make others for a time forget the cares and trials which daily and hourly oppress them, to lift them into a more elevated and cheerful atmosphere, where they may feel refreshed and renewed.[55]

For "Lillie," LDS women are compelled to provide socially emotional support for their families and community members so that all will experience times of comfort and rest in the journey through mortal existence. A simple, social entertainment becomes a chance for women to enlarge their ministry. LDS women will provide social relief from suffering in the same way that they will provide for the more material wants of their friends and neighbors.

Further, when LDS women writers provided nostalgic, flower-filled scenes for their reader's consumption, enjoyment, and release, they were taking to active heart "Lillie's" statement as they themselves became literary agents of comfort, solace, and joy to the wider community in their vivid, flower-filled re-creations of one of these moments of expansion. They modeled the floral emblem of the Relief Society as they became literary Sego Lilies, humbly offering their work—integral parts of themselves—for consumption and spiritual refreshment of the larger community. These

writers were doing their part to evoke in the reader an imagined instant at a social gathering filled with family and friends from far away. The writers became literary accessories to the organizers and, by extension, to the spiritually vivifying social gatherings. In these literary descriptions, the writers prolonged, extended, and intensified the social, comforting work of the women who organized the each social gathering. They did their womanly duty in the way that their talents allowed them.

But we need to take this logic one step further in order to see the full, theological impact of nature and flower imagery. I would argue that underlying the seemingly trivial demonstration of women's ability to relieve suffering through social celebrations—or a writer's ability to establish a moment of remembered, preexistential happiness—lies the final and most convincing connection between women, suffering, and Jesus Christ. In these literary creations, LDS women writers assure all the faithful that they will be resurrected into eternity and will get to experience for themselves divine joy and immortality in the flower-filled realms of heaven. Just as women writers justify the importance of the home by connecting it to preexistence, but, ultimately, most powerfully, to heaven, so also these literary moments of release are made finally most powerful by the reference to the experience of final salvation. By means of nature and flower imagery, writers can be referring to the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ, the immediate introduction of the individual soul into the Spirit World upon death, and the ultimate resurrection and reunion of the body with the soul upon the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of mortal time. Each one of these transitions is a crucial element in the overarching plan of salvation and all three are closely interconnected, with each transition or resurrection implying the reality of the other two. With their experiential, literary promptings, writers assure their readers: as the withered flowers will inevitably revive in the springtime—or as the reader or participant in social events and childhood memories revives and, for a precious moment in time, lives this ultimate reality—so, too, will the faithful dead spring to life in the heavenly warmth, and for all eternity. In this way, the repeated use of nature and flower imagery provides a continuous, experienced, textual ritual of sustenance and micro-atonement. For theological proof, LDS women authors combine the immanent reality of nature with an idealized, literary interpretation as they seek to reassure and sustain their sisters in faith—as they seek to describe, but also erase from within their readers real pain, doubts, and challenges.

By employing this symbolism of female-identified beneficial nature to describe these resurrections, LDS women authors argue that women literally, and femaleness as an abstract concept, are closely associated with the

foundational salvific power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ—an association that men had already through the priesthood and their institutional positions within the church. In this popular theology, women also represent this power within the mortal world. While women are shown to have a special relationship to suffering and self sacrifice, in the end, they are given the compensation that they will embody the highest salvation to their community of faith. As earthly representatives of Jesus Christ, they will do his exemplary work of expiatory sacrifice on a small scale, just as female-identified natural elements act as God's handmaids in evidencing forth the reality of God and God's laws. In their lives of Christ-like self-sacrifice as described by means of nature and flower imagery, women become living and embodied reminders of the expiatory suffering of the cross for God's chosen people. The authors argue that through this communal, gendered, suffering and expiation, women will bring their faith community along with them on the journey to eternity. For one brief and, paradoxically, ephemeral textual moment, the female reader can experience the reality of eternal life, and can identify themselves with the beauty and eternity of this reality.

Ultimately, this nature and flower theology seeks to reassure women of the meaning of their seemingly anonymous lives. The symbolism argues that women are the glue of the community: they are the links, like nature, between the reality of God and God's laws and the community in its everyday existence. The unassuming dispositions of women and nature—their dignity in humility—demonstrate their authentic linkage with the divine. Their lowliness proves their paramount and foundational importance for the survival and spiritual thriving of the LDS community. Their daily sacrifices and sufferings lift the community ever higher toward the goal of ultimate and final salvation. By using flower and nature imagery, LDS women authors argue for the humbleness, the sublimity, the fragility, and resiliency of women's mortal and eternal lives. Women as a group are shown to be the *de facto* backbone of the community, a backbone that can never be broken and will, in fact, be a crucial support in ushering the community into eternal life.

This imagery assures women of their eternal importance by seeming to work against the largely patriarchal focus of LDS theology. This theological argument on the surface challenges but, ultimately, reinforces the male-centered focus of the church. The eternal indestructibility and power of femaleness is predicated on unseen and unacknowledged women taking on the extra burden of trials, injustices, and sorrows for their community of faith. If the secret of women's suffering were institutionalized or officially acknowledged, it would automatically lose efficacy, just as the power of

Jesus Christ's suffering would have evaporated if he had not experienced true humiliation, pain, and abandonment.

Women authors were seeking to stake out for themselves unseen, but important spiritual real estate. They desired, but also claimed to fear the attention and celebration of their community. By arguing that women were key players in the plan of salvation, but that they also needed to humbly accept that largely unacknowledged and self-sacrificing place, women writers successfully raised the public profile of women in a rhetorically safe fashion—in a way that did not challenge the structures and theology of their chosen community of faith.

In the end, to encapsulate this theological argument presented by means of nature and flower imagery, we can turn to a vision of heaven experienced by Harriet Lee when she died and then returned to mortality. In this vision, Lee was guided through various elements of the nature-filled afterlife—a beautiful greensward, a crystalline stream, mountains—until she came to a dazzling mansion into which Joseph and Hyrum Smith had just led the ten tribes of Israel. After her guide presented her paperwork to the gatekeeper, she was admitted into the mansion. As she stepped into the hall, she looked down to see to her combined horror and relief that she was walking upon, without harming, the highest symbol of purity, divinity, and pre-Fall innocence, the white rose:

> We entered and walked along a beautiful hall, the ground of floor of which was completely covered with lovely white roses. In treading upon these roses I felt that they were being crushed and spoiled, but, to my astonishment, they were not in the least affected by the tread of our feet.[56]

In the literature of turn of the century LDS female writers, women and femaleness are shown to be like the white roses on the floor of heaven. Women and the tasks they perform are humble, but necessary and pure. Like their elder brother, Jesus Christ, women take upon themselves, soothe, and support the sufferings of their community; they attempt to alleviate the very troubles and trials knowingly and lovingly introduced by their mortal mother, Eve. They are like the beautiful, supportive, self-sacrificing floor of white roses opening up to Harriet as she enters the heavenly mansion. Yet precisely because of this humility and beauty and close connection to the resurrecting Jesus Christ, the theology of nature and flower imagery argues that women and femaleness are ultimately and eternally indestructible, like the delicate tiles of white roses upon which Lee was astounded to see that her footsteps made no mark.

Conclusion

The popularity and effectiveness of nature and flower imagery as a mode of female-identified theological and literary discourse was waning by the second decade of the twentieth century. Illustrative of this fact, in 1914, *The Relief Society Magazine* replaced the *Woman's Exponent* as the official publication of the Relief Society. Under the editorship of Susa Young Gates, the *Magazine* was much more of a practical, didactic guide than had been the literary and news-filled *Exponent*. Rather than placing nature-centered poems as a prominent element on the first page of the periodical, as did the *Exponent*, the *Magazine* usually put the few poems it published at the end of each issue. In the body of the *Magazine,* along with faith-promoting stories and sermons, the articles focused on effective ways to tend gardens, sew patterns, and cook recipes. The *Magazine* was more interested in demonstrating how to actually produce beautiful flowers than in expounding on the lessons learned from these potential symbols.

Related to this shift in focus, in the *Magazine,* we can see evidence that by the beginning of the twentieth century the rationalization and systematization of beliefs and practices within the LDS church had rapidly progressed. The *Exponent,* for instance, presented lengthy and numerous reports of the proceedings of Relief Society meetings from the ward to general level—meetings that were consistent in form, but varied widely in content. On the other hand, the *Magazine* published detailed lesson schedules and meeting plans that Relief Societies church-wide were expected to follow. The *Exponent* had aimed to bring together the women of the church with common goals and modes of discourse; the *Magazine* aimed to unite these women by standardizing and systematizing the institutional aspects of their religious lives.

These changes are evidence of the process of standardization, as well as the personality differences between the sentimental, literary-minded

Wells and the more practically grounded Gates. However, this waning of the importance of nature and flower imagery was also a wider Mormon literary phenomenon. Paralleling the change of focus in the Relief Society's periodical publication, women writers published fewer books of poetry during this later time span than during the heyday of LDS women's literary accomplishments in the 1880s and 1890s. This demonstrates a shift from the first generation of women leaders, who were raised in antebellum and Victorian times, to the second and third generations of Mormon women leaders who were looking towards the technological and scientific advances of the twentieth century for models of efficient organization and communication of religious and charitable enterprises. Wells was the last of this first generation and with her passing in 1921, the process of transition was finally completed, even though that process had been taking place since the turn of the century. From the sources it is clear that nature and flower imagery—as a widespread, female-identified, and effective literary and theological mode of discourse—withered in the face of the scientific and practical focus of twentieth-century LDS church women. With the passing of the first generation, came the inevitable passing of their nature-centered, poetic mode of communication and argument.

At the height of its popularity and power, however, nature and flower imagery and poetry was a ubiquitous and effective religious language understood and employed by the women of the Mormon community. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially during the years 1880 to 1920, LDS women used nature and flower imagery within both their private and public literary work in order to demonstrate the cosmological importance of women and femaleness within the patriarchal understanding of society and salvation. These women writers were working within a tradition of already existing American nature religion. They adapted a popular, literary version of this tradition, the "culture of flowers" genre, in order to talk about issues of gender and eschatology.

Though we can now read this adaptation as a popular, supplemental theology, LDS women writers did not as a group set out to create a separate, female-identified mode of theological discourse. Rather, they set out to encourage other women and give them credit for their contributions to the LDS community. In the process of this encouragement, however, they adopted nature and flower imagery for this purpose, and this discourse became theological as a by-product of these writers' need to establish a coherent and extended discussion of women's place within the church and the plan of salvation. Women writers developed what was seen as an appropriate mode of expression in order to join in discussions about the crucial religious topics of the day. The issues under discussion—the relationship of

the genders to divinity—and the mode of expression—one based in literary imagery and revelatory encounters with nature—inevitably made women's opinions voiced by means of nature and flower imagery a popular, supplemental theology, even though that was not necessarily the self-conscious intention of the authors. Individual women wrote with the assurance that they were communicating their personal knowledge and experiences of God, a legitimate assumption within a community based on revelation and the free will of humans to choose salvation. As they joined their voices together in textual, published form and as they utilized a similar mode of discourse undergirded by common assumptions and focused on similar issues, their individual voices became something bigger. They became a loose, but coherent theological force within the church.

LDS women writers adapted and adopted this imagery as a theological discourse during this particular time period for a number of differing reasons. First, because the Mormon community was transitioning out of its earliest, charismatic phase, the beliefs and practices of the group were still in flux, but leaders and members of the church were also looking for answers, systems, and structures. In addition, the largely male-centered structure of the church held within it the paradox of implicit and important female divine and scriptural figures, as well as respected women leaders and the idea of partnership marriage and salvation. LDS scriptures and revelations did not explore these female phenomena in any great depth or with sustained coherency. In other words, these women writers were writing during a time of continuing, though increasingly limited theological and institutional flexibility, and they were filling in gray and unexplained areas.

LDS women writers adopted nature and flower imagery as an agent of expression partly because, during the mass move of church members across the plains and then also during the extended and difficult settlement of the desert Southwest, nature came to be an important and ever-present character in the literary consciousness of the LDS community. As a result of these encounters, writers of the LDS community saw nature as both a destructive obstacle and a nurturing and protective arm of God. This view of nature was shaped and reinforced by the binary understanding of nature within mainstream, popular literature of the time. Particularly as the LDS community settled into the Southwest, however, most writers chose to focus on the beneficial, beautiful, nurturing, female-identified aspects of nature because these came to have deep theological and symbolic meaning within a desert environment, and within a community that held a physical, literal view of heaven and earth.

LDS women writers were particularly attracted to nature and flower imagery, not only because the "culture of flowers" literature as a whole

was a largely female-identified and female-written genre. These LDS women writers also found it to be especially appropriate because this imagery was usually expressed through the medium of poetry. Within the LDS community, poetry as a vehicle for the gift of tongues was seen to be a language or method of revelation—and a method of revelation that women, in particular, were able to authentically utilize. In this way, nature and flower imagery easily became a method of Mormon female revelatory, theological discourse.

With this theological discourse, LDS women writers established the fundamental importance of women and femaleness within the social and cosmological structures. On the one hand, they addressed this problem on the general, abstract level of argument by employing the complementary, but binary gendering of natural elements borrowed from the mainstream and adapted during the westward settlement. They utilized a self-reinforcing, symbolic triangle of women and femaleness, benevolent and nurturing natural elements, and abstracted virtues, and opposed this construct to destructive or ambiguous male-identified natural elements. By situating this opposition within a LDS worldview that saw maleness and femaleness, as represented by male and female divinities, as the most basic material-spiritual substances of the universe, these writers argued that femaleness was a vital and foundational force within the divine realm and within the universe as a whole. Further, because LDS women writers engaged with nature as actual practitioners of nature religion—because they went to nature to find the most authentic, mystical truths from the divine realm—these assumptions had the combined weight of natural and divine truths.

But LDS women writers went further than simply showing the goodness, importance, and divinity of women and femaleness on a general, abstract level. They also utilized this argument to authorize in theological fashion the specific, home-centered role of motherhood, as well as the related, community roles of charity worker and mediator of liminality. LDS women writers employed the garden as a variation on and concentration of female-identified, virtue-laden, benevolent nature. Home and motherhood were closely associated with beautiful, flower-filled gardens; mothers were seen to be the spiritual and physical gardeners who tended and protected their homes and children. These homes and mothers were shown to be the backbone of Zion (the Mormon community as a whole) when Zion was depicted as a new Garden of Eden filled with benevolent, female-identified nature and made up of a patchwork of these garden-surrounded, mother-centered homes. LDS women writers furthered the theological authorization of motherhood and the home when they showed that garden-surrounded, mother-centered homes were earthly versions of the distant, preexistent gardens of humanity's spirit

childhood spent with God the Father and the Mother(s) in Heaven. Probably most persuasively, however, the garden-surrounded, mother-centered home was adulated and validated when writers connected it with the garden-filled fields of heaven to which all faithful members would ideally return. The eternal gardens were fundamentally different from earthly, home gardens because they would never die, but rather represented the unending happiness of heaven. The eternal garden as model was the most powerful authorization of the home and, by extension, the mother, because of the LDS belief in a literal, material heaven. As demonstrated by the human, architectural representation of the structure of the world—the temple—heaven was conceived to be a kind of perfected, ever-blooming Garden of Eden. Therefore, garden-surrounded homes created by mothers were earthly representations of this heavenly realm, in many ways parallel in salvational importance to the temple within LDS society. Like temples, homes were meant to be visible reminders of the goal of a higher, happier existence. Both earthly spaces were also supposed to aid seekers in the journey towards the final existence.

Finally, using the theological discourse of nature and flower imagery, LDS women writers moved femaleness and women to the center of the processes of salvation by showing that suffering and self-sacrifice were eschatologically crucial elements to progressive divinization. By connecting, through nature imagery, women with the scriptural, savior figures Eve and Jesus Christ, these writers argued that women were the foremost sufferers and self-sacrificers and that, therefore, women and femaleness were a foundational and unbreakable backbone of the church and of the plan of salvation. Femaleness was not just a basic element of the divine realm, but the engine fueled by suffering that drove relentlessly forward the eternal, progressive movement towards the millennium and large-scale divinization. Key to retaining the effectiveness of this eschatological role was that women would remain unseen and unheralded in their humble, difficult suffering and sacrifice. In this way, LDS women celebrated and argued for the importance of the gendered status quo, more than they called for any revolutionary, social change. But, of course, paradoxically, by adulating, celebrating, and authorizing women and femaleness through the theological discourse of nature and flower imagery, these writers assured that women and femaleness, depicted as being suffering and unseen, were, at the very least, not invisible and unknown.

This theological imagery and discourse adds balance to the more formal, self-consciously patriarchal theological sources and scriptures because it parallels the strong, though implicit female-identified elements of that theology. It also effectively highlights the strong, vibrant, and well-documented

community-based presence of women within the church, especially as this presence was represented by the extensive, well-organized, and largely independent Relief Society. Women were not simply idealistically plugging the gaps in a patriarchal theology and society, they were also actively and accurately reflecting their experience that, on a day-to-day basis, women were a vital force within the church. Within the official LDS church history, these arguments by LDS women writers—this theological imagery—does not stand as authoritative. But I would argue that when scholars try to develop a full picture of the LDS community, they should view the use of this imagery as one crucial element within a larger, varied conglomeration of experiences and discourses. As important as knowing that Mormon women were barred from exercising apostolic authority, is knowing that an influential group of LDS women argued, seemed to believe, and act accordingly, that they were as close to God and just as truly carried out God's will as their brothers in the faith, and that they were able to live without any obvious conflict with either the belief or social structures of their church. In other words, this seemingly contradictory contention was actually an accepted, or at least an alternative part of the tradition of the group. This adds another dimension to the history of this particular community, and also demonstrates the more general reality of contradictory strains, practices, and subcultures within any given religious community—contradictory but, paradoxically, not necessarily openly conflicting.

In order to tease out some of the implications of these contradictory strains within this community, the next step would be to go back to the initial, abandoned questions of the intersection between the social and theological, conceptual realms of existence and understanding. Many of the creators of nature and flower theological discourse were actively involved in their local or general Relief Societies. Many of these writers, such as Emmeline B. Wells, were important and respected players within the hierarchy of the Relief Society. It would be crucial to ask the question: How did the experiences of these elite women in the Relief Society and the church as whole stem from and also motivate the worldview articulated within this nature and flower imagery? How much did the leadership and how much did the membership shape and/ or live within this worldview?

In order to get at the answers to these questions, it would be necessary to go back and try to trace out the different purposes to which this nature-articulated worldview was put—or, more accurately, to observe more closely how women in their day-to-day existence lived within this worldview. Within this theological imagery, there were basic, foundational assumptions about the goodness and virtue of women and femaleness, but these assumptions were put to very different practical effect. As Lori

Ginzberg has pointed out, in wider American society this kind of "separate spheres" argument was used by both conservative, charity-based women's groups, as well as more radical, political women's organizations in order to justify their actions in the public domain.[1] In the LDS context, we see this same spectrum of reaction and utilization of discourse about gender. It appears that the assumptions articulated by the nature and flower theological discourse were widespread, widely understood, and widely agreed upon, but, according to the natures and understanding of individual women, these assumptions were enacted in rather different ways. As expected, there was not a one-to-one, causal correspondence between a set of assumptions and action. Some women like Emmeline B. Wells dwelt on the more challenging aspects of these arguments and used them to fuel an active political, social, and religious life aimed at bringing to the fore the issues and accomplishments of women. Wells worked with Susan B. Anthony and the National American Woman Suffrage Association as she tried to bring back women's suffrage to Utah after the Edmunds-Tucker Bill banned women from voting. When Utah became a state, she unsuccessfully ran to be a legislative representative. Other women who lived within this point of view, however, saw it as reinforcing proof that the patriarchal structure of the LDS family and church was effective, God-ordained, and the most protective of women, and that women and men should do everything possible to strictly live within their respective roles. In this view, women were to stay wholly out of the political sphere of action. Like many other unknown plural wives, Catharine Cottam Romney dedicated her life to raising her large family and living successfully within a polygamous system—she apparently had neither the desire nor the time for other pursuits.[2] LDS women saw and lived the outcome of these arguments in very different ways and it would be necessary to carefully establish this fact in order to gauge the full impact of the set of assumptions found within the theological imagery. With this research, it would be easier to delineate the relationship between the reinforcing and challenging aspects of the theological imagery.

This complex reality brings up the inevitable and unanswerable question: From the benefit of hindsight, was this theological discourse useful or destructive for women? Was the overall effect of this discourse and set of assumptions positive or negative? How should this sentimentalized equation between women, nature, and divinity be analyzed?

The scholarship on this question tends to see that the idealized equation between women and nature had a largely destructive and narrowing effect on women's self-understanding and actions. Margaret Homans, a literary historian, and Ann Douglas, a literary-cultural historian, offer slightly differing insights into this nineteenth-century phenomenon, but

both agree that the accumulated effect was not healthy for literature, women, or society as a whole. Homans, for example, argues that this equation between women and nature came to a special fruition during the florescence of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement in literature.[3] In her view, what are now seen as elite women poets such as Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson were hampered, in varying degrees, by this equation between women and nature since it was often against this mysterious "other"—feminine and uncontrollable nature—that male poets defined and developed their poetic being. Following this predominant male model, such a splitting off and placement of the personal female self against the primordial feminine nature was, in Homan's view, a potentially dangerous, self-destructive, and aggressive act for female poets in an age when the ideal was for women to be safe, passive, and enclosed within the confines of the home. In other words, she sees an impossible and stultifying result for women writers who were forced to conform to the popular, contemporary literary conventions in which female nature was an essential character. For Homans, Romantic female writers could never fully and fruitfully define their literary self-identities because they were hampered by the literary conventions of the day that were created in the widespread gendering of nature. The preoccupation with natural imagery and symbolism within the literature of the time was not, in her view, socially or creatively a beneficial development for women authors or readers; it was, rather, a defeating and destructive circle of self-exploration.

Writing about popular prose literature of the day, Douglas follows this general line of thinking, but also sees an inevitable split between high Romantic, male literary culture and a debased, destructive, sentimentalized, and female-dominated popular literature.[4] Like Homans, for Douglas, the problem of authentic self-definition is paramount for judging the worth of this women's literature. According to Douglas, women writers were unable to attain the heights of their Romantic brethren because they were caught in the stagnating and oppressive roles offered to nineteenth-century women. Their literature could do nothing but express their cramped and disfigured senses of self and self worth. It could only reinforce the already exacting societal strictures and expectations that they lived within.

Though the genres are somewhat different, Douglas would probably interpret in the same way the heavy use of flower and nature symbolism within the poetry and literature of LDS women, and, more generally, American women. For Douglas, the use of flower and nature imagery by women prose writers was a sign of degeneracy, triviality, and self-destructiveness. As an example of one of these negative effects, Douglas argues that when women adopted flower- and nature-related names, they willingly took on

the role of hothouse and superfluous flowers.[5] Douglas further criticizes the work of mainstream female sentimental authors as being simply "vegetative myths." She argues that these myths had no ability to intrude into and change history because they did not acknowledge the existence of linear history, or, therefore, the ability to change that history with directed and sustained actions.[6] For Douglas, when women writers utilized nature symbolism, or to use her term, "vegetative myth," they symbolically ceded power and authority that was already rapidly waning. According to Douglas, these writers were simply giving in to the status quo; they were unthinkingly supporting the established gendered roles and norms. "Vegetative myth" was their effective instrument of surrender to the inevitable.

Both Homans and Douglas persuasively highlight the potentially negative side effects of the use of nature and flower symbolism by nineteenth-century women writers. One can legitimately argue that the LDS use of nature and flower imagery was even more potentially destructive than the mainstream use because the LDS understanding further naturalized, even divinized the mainstream set of assumptions about gender. Women were shown to be essentially female, naturally mothers and wives, and, especially in respect to the practice of polygamy, required to sacrifice and suffer for their community at sometimes great emotional and physical costs. One can also argue that the theological authorization of femaleness and women by means of nature and flower imagery helped to facilitate the continuation of this understanding of gender into the present-day LDS community. Among many others, Shipps has noted that the LDS church is notable and distinct from mainstream American society because it has self-consciously maintained Victorian ideas about family and gender relations.[7] It can be argued that nineteenth-century LDS women writers helped to cement a narrow and overly idealized vision of what femaleness is and how women should live and act. This is a vision that is now in the present producing increasing tension and problems between a membership that must adapt itself to the norms of twenty-first-century society and still live within the more traditional expectations of their church.

However, I would also argue that it is hard, if not impossible to gauge the effects of the theological, intellectual realm—even the popular, media- and literary-driven aspects of that realm—on the day-to-day life of a community, or a segment of a community. Within the lives of the faithful of any community, often the theological and the practical, the ideal and the real, exist on parallel and non-intersecting planes. Ideals and norms play an important part in the consciousness of any religious group. As Bruce Lincoln has pointed out in his work, especially when utilized by powerful elements within society, these ideals can often produce deeply harmful and/ or

revolutionary effects for some or all members of a community.[8] Yet, because these norms are also usually impossible to achieve in actual life and society, they are usually selectively adapted to individual and community lives, and, when convenient, they are implicitly or explicitly ignored and even rejected. The reality of life on the ground is always much more messy and often in open contradiction with the stated ideals and norms of any given religious community. These kinds of value judgments, while tempting and necessary to make, are incredibly hard to gauge and prove in a real and convincing way. This is precisely why further, close, socially oriented research is called for with this particular question.

Further, while this imagery reinforced and essentialized social and religious norms, it also allowed women to challenge these same norms in a safe and effective way. It cut both ways—it reinforced traditional norms, as it empowered and authorized women through these same assumptions. Through this discourse, for instance, women could express deep anger and protest against perceived social wrongs or conventions—and in a way that gave them authority and heft within the community. The theological use of nature and flower imagery as an understated and non-confrontational means of argumentation, is actually a telling example of the more general approach that LDS women took in advocating for themselves. At a meeting for the young women of the church, Relief Society President Zina Young was once asked if women held the priesthood in connection with their husbands. Couched in terms of nature imagery, her reply is revealing. She said: "That we should be thankful for the many blessings we enjoyed and say nothing about it[.] If you plant a grain of wheat and keep poking and looking at it to see if it was growing you would spoil the root."[9] Nature and flower imagery allowed women to quietly strengthen the root system of women's lives within the church. It gave women a theological voice that was used to both reinforce and challenge behavior and beliefs of the community without openly antagonizing their fellow members.

Whether this strategy was in the end successful can be debated, but in this nature-centered voice we can discern the most important issues, ideals, and tensions within the lives and thoughts of LDS women. This imagery acts as a deeply revealing window into the internal and social lives of the women of this community as they struggled to define their position within the church.

And, it should be noted, this window could and should be enlarged even more and in a number of ways. I would suggest that though I have interpreted nature and flower imagery as a supplemental, female-identified theology, it had a more general scope for Mormonism. In many ways this imagery as a tool of theological meaning and discourse has had continuing

impact within the community as a whole and over time. By studying this imagery, we get a much better understanding of the history and theology of the entire community. Another vital step in researching this question would be to widen the focus and consider more carefully the importance of nature and flower imagery to the more general LDS worldview. Nature had vital meaning to the entire LDS community, and while women in particular utilized nature and flower imagery, as has been seen, men writers, thinkers, and leaders also understood it and employed it. When women used nature and flower imagery in theological discourse, they were speaking a language that the entire community understood.

The material, cultural manifestation of nature and flower imagery is one intriguing, obvious dimension of this popular theology that I have not had time to address. Flowers and nature were important decorative elements incorporated into art, furniture, linens, dishes, clothing, advertisements. They were decorative elements found on just about any material aspect of the home, and even beyond. The importance of this material version of nature of flower imagery was forcefully brought home to me during a visit to the Salt Lake City museum of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, an organization composed of descendants of Mormon pioneers who crossed the plains between 1847 and 1869. As a repository for the possessions and creations of Mormon women pioneers (and to a lesser extent, men pioneers), the museum holds countless objects of the mid- to late-Victorian era, many of which are embroidered, painted, and embellished with natural designs. I was struck particularly by the many wreaths of flowers constructed out of the hair of family members. Hair work was a popular pastime during the nineteenth century in the United States and Europe, more generally, but it seems to me that these kinds of wreaths would have had special significance in a community that looked for eternal family reunions in flower-filled heavens. In this context, the wreath of hair flowers takes on greater meaning, literally symbolizing the eternal, intertwining endurance of family ties in an idealized nature-filled environment. These pieces, along with the rest of nature-centered Mormon material culture need to be more carefully analyzed in order to understand the full meaning and impact of nature and flower imagery within the community.

These questions also need to be brought forward in time. Nature and flower imagery did not completely disappear from the community. On the more purely literary and symbolic levels, the continuing meaning and power of nature and flower imagery among LDS women—and the Mormon community as a whole—can be seen decades later, in the 1950s, in a history of the Saint George Relief Society. Nature and flower imagery as a

means of female religious discourse makes sporadic, but regular appearances in this locally researched and written history. At one point, for instance, the related tropes of flowers, memory, and virtuous women are rearticulated when a writer notes that a bouquet of spring flowers displayed at a Relief Society anniversary celebration instantly brought back memories to participants of their heroic, virtuous pioneer women ancestors.

> Against the blue velvet curtains [the flowers'] eerie and oriental beauty caught the eye of everyone. The delightful and elusive perfume from these tiny pink blossoms, clustered on gnarled red branches, mingled with the sedate fragrance of bowls of violets, pansies, and daffodils brought tender memories of our own dear mothers and grandmothers who had pioneered this forbidding land and had literally made the "desert blossom as a rose."[10]

It seems appropriate that these first generation pioneer women should be remembered as—or by means of—the flowers that they argued they embodied and exemplified. This identification was so successful and complete that, two generations later, the mere perfume of flowers sets off a now familiar train of associations in the granddaughters and great-granddaughters of these women. Fifty years after the height of female-identified, theological discourse based in nature and flower imagery, beneficial nature continued to have symbolic and cosmological meaning.

Even today we can regularly discover elements of this nature and flower imagery. The continuing importance of nature and flower imagery to the community as a whole can be glimpsed in a photographic picture book of the beautiful and world famous gardens surrounding the Salt Lake City Temple. At one point in the book, next to a photograph of blooming iris, the text notes: "Cunning dwarf iris renew our faith in Christ's message that there is a resurrection and life beyond the grave."[11] Later in the book in conjunction with photographs of tubs of flowers displayed in front of Brigham Young's restored home, the author explains that these tubs are filled with flowers "in monochromatic color schemes," and that each color "represents a different value for the young women of the Church."[12] Reinforcing this evidence, in summer 2005, during a tour of the LDS Convention Center across the street from the Salt Lake City Temple, the missionary guide took my group to the roof of the building. The roof is designed as a layered wilderness emerging from a hillside and at its center stands a fountain meant, according to the guide, to represent the four rivers of the Garden of Eden. In other words, at each of its twice yearly General Conferences, the church gathers beneath a representation of perfected

nature, the perfection that all Mormons are attempting to bring about on earth and find in heaven. Even today, women, flowers, and abstract virtues continue to act as a self-reinforcing, symbolic triangle. As read in the lessons of benevolent, beautiful nature, the temple and its grounds still act as potent and didactic models for the community—just as they did a century ago for a young Juanita Brooks. Benevolent and beautiful nature retains great symbolic and theological meaning in the LDS community.[13]

Questions beg to be answered: As the years progressed, how important a part of women's lives and women's literature was this imagery? How did it change and adapt? Can we interpret modern versions of this imagery in the same way that we interpret the early versions? How much continuity and how much discontinuity is there within the history of this imagery?

In taking the next steps and asking the inevitable questions, it is also necessary to look more closely at nature and flower imagery as theological discourse within mainstream Protestant and Catholic women's religious literature in order to more fully contextualize the LDS use. Because of the Mormon physical and material view of the universe, the mainstream, "culture of flowers" conceptions about heaven as a literal place had added resonance in the LDS community. Popular fare such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Gates Ajar* may have been meaningful and attractive to Victorian Protestant and Catholic women, but such literalist interpretations took on cosmological significance when Joseph Smith revealed the secret that God was an embodied being living in heaven. In many ways, LDS women writers did not so much adapt nature and flower imagery from mainstream literature. Rather, they adopted it as theological discourse because it already expressed a mind set remarkably close to the LDS worldview.

Even given that this imagery fit easily into the LDS worldview, can we really draw distinctions between conceptions meaningful in the popular media and consciousness and oppose them to conceptions presented within the context of this particular church and religious tradition? Or, in the end, are such distinctions meaningless? Is the LDS use of nature and flower imagery as theological discourse really all that different in effect and conception from mainstream, popular use? Further discussion of this subject would require a much wider net of research and inquiry. However, I believe that many of the theological arguments and assumptions that show up in the LDS context and discourse are valid in wider American literature and that, therefore, many of the conclusions drawn here have a more general significance within the history of American religions. Each community of faith would read this imagery somewhat differently and according to their own theological understandings and emphases. In the Catholic community,

for instance, I suspect that the figure of Mary took on much greater significance than in the LDS community, and that women probably identified themselves by means of nature and flower imagery more commonly with her than with Jesus Christ and Eve. As another example, women's suffering would probably be understood more distinctly as punishment for Eve and a somewhat different kind of divinization or sainting. I would suggest that we have here a pan-Anglo-American, female, popular mode of theological discourse. The basic shape of the argument stays the same across denominations, but different themes and tropes are emphasized—and perhaps somewhat different conclusions are reached in each case. This question calls out for more investigation.

Whatever the answers to these crucial questions, we are left with a useful case study. In this case study, we can observe how a group of women writers and thinkers converted a popular, well-known set of images into a powerful, easily understood and utilized religious discourse. In the well-documented remains of LDS women's literature, historians of religion can witness firsthand the process of religious and theological meaning making, and can begin to piece together some of the necessary components of this successful process, especially as this process was carried out by women and highlighted issues of gender.

In this context, most women were well educated in the basic theology, practices, and structures of the church. Through sermons, testimonials, temple ceremonies, and scriptural and religious reading, members of the church were given part of the power and knowledge necessary to achieve their individual salvation. One of the reasons that women were able to develop an effective voice was that they understood the worldview and theology within which they lived. The church excluded women from wielding the power of the priesthood in the way that men did, through institutional leadership structures, but it allowed and even encouraged women to engage with almost all aspects of the LDS belief system. Because women possessed knowledge of the basic content of LDS beliefs, as well as the reasoning that stood behind the content, they were able to take the first step in creating and communicating meaning. To put it simply, they knew the rules of the game and they knew, therefore, the best way to play within and with these rules without overstepping the bounds.

Women writers also had access to a set of tools—nature and flower imagery—that allowed them to push the boundaries of their discourse beyond the strictly official sources of meaning and authority. They had outside help in the form of a firm, literary foothold from which to express their concerns and arguments. This imagery worked so well because it was already well established and widely accepted and, probably most important,

it was deemed an appropriate and safe mode of discourse for women. What is so interesting about LDS women writer's utilization of nature and flower imagery is not so much that it allowed them to argue new and challenging conclusions. What is so valuable to the historian of religion about this imagery is that it shows how women developed another mode of discussing and arguing crucial issues in their lives, beliefs, and practices. We can see that the real work and power of this mode of communication was enacted when women wrote with it and, in turn, read with it. This imagery empowered and enlivened women's lives and literature because it allowed them an effective means of exchange and expression. In the very act of reading and writing LDS women staked their claim in the theological plot of their faith.

Finally, women were able to successfully participate in the process of meaning making because they developed methods to broadcast their voices: monographic and periodical publication, as well as the less public means of letter and diary writing. Without this crucial step in the process, all of their knowledge, experiences, and efforts would have gone to waste. Within fairly wide parameters, women writers and editors made decisions about what would or would not be available for consumption by their women and men readers. For a while, a group of women within the church controlled a small but crucial bandwidth of church and church-related publications. Within this bandwidth, they were able to create an articulate and long-lasting voice within their community.

In this case study of meaning making and discourse on gender by women, what seems key are the elements of knowledge and limited control. In considering this case, we must ask the more general questions: Can women in any given faith community speak effectively about gender—or any other issues—if they do not have access to the content and reasoning of their group? What level of religious knowledge is necessary for them to become players in the theological and intellectual life of the community? Does this particular case study confirm the claim that women in groups based on revelation have more space—for a time, at least—to become the leaders and thinkers in their communities? By bringing together a number of similar case studies, we can put this access to knowledge and revelation on a spectrum and then begin to draw more general conclusions about the potential for women within religious groups to develop articulate and effective voices.

What also seems important here is that the mode of discourse and argumentation was not openly challenging or disturbing to the structures and beliefs of Mormonism. Is it always true that the most successful theological foothold for women will be the least challenging? Is it the case that

for women to develop theological voices and become religious meaning makers, they must proceed cautiously and within the restraints of their tradition? Is the fact that women have a voice in the community enough for them to, in some way, direct the theological, mythological, and institutional direction of the group? And, if the least openly challenging is the most successful, can this mode of discourse, ultimately, be fully successful for women if it does not break through some of the accumulation of tradition and assumption that restricts their voices in the first place? As illustrated by the LDS example, it does indeed seem that the most socially acceptable and immediately successful mode of argumentation about gender is often the one least challenging and disturbing. This fact implies that meaning making and change in assumptions about gender proceed slowly and with fits and starts—and sometimes, as in the case of twenty-first-century LDS women, seem to be largely erased.

These facts help confirm that assumptions about gender are among the most basic and most intractable structures within religious groups. Any discourse about gender, particularly discourse about gender by women becomes, therefore, disproportionately charged with potential danger and destabilization. This is especially the true in the Mormon and, more generally, the American context where women and femaleness were seen to be the stabilizing foundations of society. This provokes the question: Is it usually the case within religions that women's discussions of gender become lightning rods for fears within and about the community? Are there societies and religions where this is not true? From this case study it appears that sustained intellectual or theological movement by women outside of the established assumptions is seen to be especially perilous. Women's discourse about gender becomes over-determined with meaning as each point is weighed and dissected for risks to the standing order of society. Nature and flower imagery was successful precisely because it allowed women to take up the discussion of gender—in sometimes challenging ways—but behind conventional sentimentality and beautiful imagery. The reader built up in his or her mind's eye idealized, structured visions of lovely nature in such a way that he or she may not have always recognized that the flashpoint issue of gender undergirded these perfected literary creations. Nature and flower imagery acted as an effective tool of distraction and diversion within the perilous and threatening landscape of discussions about gender by women. From this point of view, beautiful, beneficent, female-identified elements of nature—as vehicles of these discussions—became, potentially and ironically, the destructive and destabilizing elements that they stood against in the literary landscape.

When we survey the process by which LDS women became vital forces within the discourse of their faith community, we glimpse the complex and multifaceted nature of any and each religious community as its members engage in the continuous process of adapting their lives and understanding to changing circumstances—as they search for meaningful ways to communicate and conceptualize the vital issues of their religious lives to themselves and to each other.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. For just a sampling of seminal work on these issues, see, for instance: Linda King Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood," *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism,* Maxine Hanks (ed.) (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 23–48; Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 22, nos. 3–4 (June 1999); Anne Firor Scott, "Mormon Women, Other Women: Paradoxes and Challenges," *The Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986–1987): 3–19.
2. Jan Shipps, "Dangerous History: Exploring the Role of Mormon Women," *The Christian Century* 110, no. 29 (October 20, 1993): 1012–1015.
3. Olive Woolley Kimball, journal, June 29, 1901, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. Bird Robinson, "A Mormon Wife Reveals Her Great Sorrow," *Millennial Star* 51, no. 37 (Sept. 16, 1889): 580.
5. Hannah Tapfield King, "Lines," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no.18 (Feb. 15, 1880): 137.
6. For discussions of the importance of popular religious elements in the religions of the United States of America, see: Peter Williams, *Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 3–5
7. Charles H. Lippy, *Being Religious, American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 10.
8. For examples of contemporary American women who used these arguments, see: Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Rise of the Welfare State* (New York:

Routledge, 1993). For somewhat earlier, "separate spheres" versions of this argument, see: Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

9. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Doris L. Swarthout, *An Age of Flowers* (Old Greenwich, Conn.: Chatham Press, 1975), 22, 31–34, 51–54, 113, 147. For a more academic discussion of this phenomenon, see: Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 4–15.
2. Swarthout, *An Age of Flowers,* 147.
3. Jack Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 2 (1990): 151.
4. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 135.
5. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 137.
6. Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 87.
7. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 138. Goody sees Latour's work as a refinement and focusing of the eighteenth-century interest in things "oriental," an interest that was sparked by published letters that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote during her travels through Turkey. In these letters and in later works written by other authors, Montagu somewhat misleadingly described the custom in Turkey of writing love letters by the compilation of certain symbolic objects, including flowers. Focusing solely on flowers, Latour then took this idea and ran with it, formalizing, albeit in a fictionalized manner, the exact elements and combinations of these supposedly Turkish communications. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 133–135. Seaton also sees that this "language" was inspired by the general interest in things "oriental" generated by Montagu's letters, as well as letters by Seigneur Aubry de la Mottraye. Seaton, 61–62.
8. For a full discussion of the early French history of "language of flowers" books, see: Seaton, 61–78.
9. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 138.
10. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 141–142.
11. Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," 142–147.
12. For a fuller discussion of the permutations of the "language of flowers" genre, see: Seaton, 16, 83.
13. Seaton, 84–86.
14. Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 82.
15. Albanese, *Nature Religion,* 7.
16. Albanese, *Nature Religion,* 199.

17. Albanese, *Nature Religion,* 10.
18. Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 25.
19. Sherry B. Ortner, "So, **Is** Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).
20. Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern, eds., *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
21. Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature in Eighteenth-century French Thought," in *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 26.
22. Bloch and Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature," 31.
23. Bloch and Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature," 33. Taking a more theological tack, Rosemary Radford Ruether has also written extensively on the negative equation between women and nature within the Christian tradition. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).
24. Bloch and Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature," 32.
25. Bloch and Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature," 43.
26. According to Lori Ginzberg, nineteenth-century women used the assumption of women's greater morality and purity in order to not only affirm women's privilege within the home, but also to organize various kinds of benevolent organizations ranging from the politically conservative work of purely charitably organizations to the more overtly radical work of the suffrage movement. Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 3.
27. Seaton, 122.
28. Henry Gardiner Adams, *The Language and Poetry of Flowers* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1858), 28–29.
29. Adams writes: "It was an easy transition, after they [flowers] had come to be regarded as proofs and manifestations of divine love, goodness, and protection, to make them the signs and symbols of human feelings and passions; hence hopes, fears, and desires, joys and sorrows, and all the sentiments and emotions which sway and agitate the soul of man, have had appropriate expression in these mute, yet eloquent letters of the blooming 'alphabet of creation'[.]" Adams, *Language and Poetry,* 17.
30. Adams, *Language and Poetry,* 129.
31. "Sabbath Evening," *Ladies Repository* 2, 1 (July 1875): 24.
32. Adams, *Language and Poetry,* 95.
33. For the Goodales, this closeness to the source of all good makes nature and flowers not only pleasant messengers of the divine and exemplars of female attributes, but also links nature and women on a deeper, more spiritual and emotional level. In a long poem about an ambitious country girl who goes to the city to find fame and fortune, only to discover drudgery and unhappiness,

the rediscovery of nature re-sparks her humanness and, even more interestingly, her femaleness. Returning home a mature woman in order to deal with a family emergency, at the first sight of her country homeland:

> [T]he breath of life, the influence divine,
> Divinely gracious, bountiful and good,
> Roused all the essence of her womanhood—
> She felt her slackened pulses quicker beat,
> The warm blood started to her pallid cheek,
> The old light flashed within her darkened eyes,
> And, melted in a flood of happy tears,
> One golden hour undid the work of years.

The basic make up of women and nature are coalesced into one divine and creative state of being. This equation of essential beings serves as the foundation for the seemingly trite and common metamorphosis of the light, happy aspects of nature into metaphorical females. Elaine Goodale, "Transplanted," *Apple-Blossoms: Verses of Two Children* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1879), 70–71.

34. Elaine Goodale, "Two Sonnets," *Apple-Blossoms,* 141.
35. Elaine and Dora Read Goodale, "Dedication: To Our Mother," *Apple-Blossoms,* v.
36. Elaine Goodale, "My Window Curtain," *Apple-Blossoms,* 67–68.
37. "The Wind and the Breeze," *Ladies Repository* 13, 2 (February 1874): 118.
38. Elaine Goodale, "The Farewell of the Season," *Apple-Blossoms,* 44–52.
39. Elaine Goodale, "Through Storm and Calm," *Apple-Blossoms,* 137.
40. Adams, *Language and Poetry,* 60–61. See also: Ann Pratt, "Wild Flowers," in *Language and Poetry,* Henry Adams (ed.), 190–191.
41. Adams, *Language and Poetry,* 173.
42. Marie Roseau, "Hare-Bell. Submission," in *Language and Poetry,* Henry Adams (ed.), 262–264.
43. Roseau, "Hare-Bell," 264. Like Adams, the Goodales argue for the ability of femaleness and female aspects of nature to absorb, though not directly challenge, the negative activities of the wild, male part of nature; or, in a more literal interpretation of the symbolism, the ability of women to withstand and sustain themselves amidst the inevitable and cyclical suffering and difficulties in human life. As in the Adams' book, the female aspects of nature are usually conceived as being on the receiving end of this uncontrolled and often ruthless power—as being victims—and yet, ultimately, victors through the simple ability to persist in the order of their existence. In "Trailing Arbutus," Elaine first pictures the flowering plant as being nurtured, grown by, and then outliving gentle summer. This nurture and the promise of springtime allow the plant to sustain itself through the trouble and difficulties of winter. The persistent endurance through fierce winter and male-identified troubles, rather than the overpowering of the wildness and indiscriminateness of winter, creates the triumph of the Arbutus: it is an

inner and mysterious strength of femaleness demonstrated irrefutably by the surrounding natural order. Elaine Goodale, "Trailing Arbutus," *Apple-Blossoms,* 27.

44. "The Neglected Vine," *Ladies Repository* 1, 3 (March 1875): 195; "My Heliotrope," *Ladies Repository* 1, 3 (March 1875): 209.
45. Jack Goody, "The Secret Language of Flowers," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 2 (1990): 151. Seaton, 2, 108–110.
46. Seaton notes that in general American culture the "language of flowers" genre was on the decline by the late nineteenth century. Seaton, 84.
47. For more information on these cultural developments, see: Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The Polysophical Society: A Phoenix Infrequent," *Encylia* (1981): 145–153.
48. Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 13.
49. Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The Woman's Exponent: Forty-two Years of Speaking for Women," *Utah Historical Quaterly* 44, 3 (summer 1976): 224.
50. Sheree Bench, "'More Light and Room': The Faith and Feminism of Lucinda Lee Dalton" (unpublished paper given at Women's History Initiative conference, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute, Brigham Young University, June 17, 2005), 2.
51. Carol Cornawall Madsen, "A Mormon Woman in Victorian America," (Ph.D. diss,, University of Utah, 1985), 69
52. Madsen, "Mormon Woman," 23–25.
53. Bennion, 231.
54. Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Remember the Women of Zion:' A Study of the Editorial Content of the Woman's Exponent, A Mormon Woman's Journal" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1977), 45.
55. Emmeline B. Wells, "Editorial Notes," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 9 (Nov. 1, 1891): 69.
56. Emmeline B. Wells, "Items," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 2 (Aug. 1, 1893): 16.
57. Emmeline B. Wells, "Home Affairs," *Woman's Exponen*t 10, no. 4 (July 15, 1881): 29.
58. M., "Literary Women of Utah. Thoughts on 'Homespun Talk,'" *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 4 (July 15, 1884): 31–32.
59. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher also notes that Wells had a propensity for nature poetry. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Poetry and Private Lives: Newspaper Verse on the Mormon Frontier," *Brigham Young University Studies* 25, 3 (1985): 59.
60. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, *A Fragment: The Autobiography of Mary Jane Mount Tanner* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1980), 172.
61. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, *A Fragment,* 120.
62. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, *A Fragmen*t, 124.

63. Augusta Joyce Crocheron, "To the Spirit of Poesy," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1880): 97.
64. Mary Jane Mount Tanner, *A Fragment,* 122.
65. Mary John, et al, "Resolutions of Respect," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no.17 (Feb. 1, 1890): 187.
66. Martha Cragun Cox, autobiography, p. 1, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
67. Cox, autobiography, p. 1.
68. Ansine M. Peterson, autobiography and journal, p. 1, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
69. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (ed.), *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), xviii.
70. Beecher, *Personal Writing*s, xviii.
71. Beecher, *Personal Writings,* xx.
72. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 122.
73. Perhaps the extreme of this view can be seen in the belief in the nineteenth century that Mormons had horns. Thus, for instance, even into the early twentieth century, Mamie Adams as a young girl encountered, on the train to the World's Fair in San Francisco, a young Presbyterian woman who was so shocked to find that Adams did not have horns, that she ran to find her minister husband. Mamie Adams, "Recollections of Early Bluff," p. 13, Oral History Program, Southeastern Utah Project, Utah State Historical Society. Similarly, when Zelma Black Acton's father worked in southern Utah as an Indian agent for the Utes (the Native American tribe after which the state was named), the wife of one of his non-Mormon co-workers apparently believed that Mormons also grew horns. Zelma Black Acton, interview, p. 4, White Mesa Ute Oral History Project, Utah State Historical Society.
74. Lori G. Beaman notes the wide diversity of opinions among modern LDS women about women and their place in the Mormon community. Lori G. Beaman, "Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious Diversity and the Latter Day Saints Church," *Sociology of Religion* 62, 1 (2001): 65–86.
75. For a more detailed discussion of some of these differences, see: Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The 'Leading Sisters': A Female Hierarchy in Nineteenth Century Mormon Society," *The Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 25–39; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 197–198.
76. Cox, autobiography, p. 99.
77. Juanita Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1983), 112.
78. Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus,* 112.

79. Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus,* 112.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Jan Shipps, "Reformation and Restoration," in *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 67–85.
2. Shipps writes: "As the Christian story is neither simply a reinterpretation nor continuation of the Hebraic-Judaic story, so the Mormon story departs significantly from the story of Abraham and the histories of Israel and Christianity as those stories are understood by Christians and Jews." Shipps, *Mormonism,* 46.
3. In the modern church, this is often termed "pre-mortal existence." For LDS scriptural description of these doctrines, see: Moses 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 93: 29 (hereafter abbreviated as D & C).
4. 2 Nephi 2:22.
5. 2 Nephi 2: 6–7; Mosiah 4: 6–7; Alma 34:8.
6. 2 Nephi 3: 7–9; D & C 3:9; D & C 5:9–10.
7. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 15 (summer 1976): 200.
8. Larson, "King Follet," 200.
9. Larson, "King Follet," 200.
10. Larson, "King Follett," 201.
11. Larson, "King Follett," 201.
12. Sarah M. Kimball, "Our Sixth Sense, or the Sense of Spiritual Understanding," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no.18 (April 15, 1895): 251.
13. D & C 107: 1–20; D & C 84: 6–40; JS-H 68–72. For a description of the historical development of the priesthood, see: Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 3–44.
14. In the Mormon version of the Abraham story, Abraham describes the priesthood power he holds as coming from his male forebears (Abraham 1:3).
15. D & C 84: 25; D & C 121: 37.
16. D & C 84; D & C 107.
17. For a description of the development of the offices of the priesthood, see: Prince, 74–77.
18. For a fuller description of the development of the ordinance of baptism within the church, see: Prince, 83–92
19. Larson, "King Follet," 207.
20. D & C 76: 70–86.
21. D & C 76: 31–38; D & C 76: 43–45; D & C 42: 18.
22. S. W. Richards, "Family Relations," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 18 (March 15, 1893): 138.
23. "True father hood and mother hood may be secured in this relation, by which man puts on the character of God, his father; even Him who is the father of us all: and may in time like one of old who was in the image of

God think it not robbery to be equal with Gods and why not? From this relation springs the increase that grows into Kingdoms; and those Kingdoms in the progress of their development will demand thrones, principalities and powers;—the same position and powers as are now ascribed to our heavenly Father, and by virtue of which He is God." S. W. Richards, "Family Relation," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no.18 (March 15, 1893): 138.

24. D & C 132: 18.
25. D & C 127; D & C 128.
26. Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (eds.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 89.
27. Madsen, 89. For a complete history of the development of temples ceremonies, see: David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).
28. Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography by Annie Clark Tanner* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1991), 58.
29. Elizabeth Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872–1873: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1995), 19–20.
30. Kane, *Gentile Account,* 43.
31. Kane, *Gentile Account,* 129.
32. These characters appear in the following passages of the Book of Mormon: Abesh: Alma 19: 16–29; Isabel: Alma 39: 3–4; Sariah: 1 Nephi 2–18.
33. G., "Woman Amongst the Nephites," *Woman's Exponen*t 9, no. 1 (June 1, 1880): 7–8.
34. Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 21.
35. Daynes, 39–40.
36. Daynes, 39–40.
37. For a fuller discussion of the LDS doctrinal and theological explanations of polygamy as necessary for restoring the correct relations between men and women, see: Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexualtiy: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 174–176. Foster elucidates some of the LDS justification for polygamy: "Polygamy would allow men to reassert their proper authority and leadership. It would free them from the unnatural sexual influence women hold over men in monogamous system." Foster, 176.
38. Tanner, *Mormon Mother,* 62.
39. "Ladies Semi-Monthly Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 26, no. 24 (May 15–26, 1898): 286.
40. Jane Kartchner Morris, journals and reminiscences 1916 Oct.-1971 Feb., p. 12, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department,

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more information on the office of the Patriarch and Patriarchal Blessings, see: Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

41. Thanks to Jill Derr for emphasizing this point to me. For more discussion on this point, see: Melodie Moench Charles, "Precedents for Mormon Women from Scriptures," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (eds.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 57.
42. D & C 132: 19.
43. Madsen, 80–110.
44. Madsen, 85.
45. Madsen, 90.
46. Derr notes: "Her intense obedience and loyalty to the Church and its leaders gained her a position of trust and authority in teaching, directing, and ministering to the women of the Church that is without parallel in Mormon history."Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, 1 (1996–1997): 112.
47. Derr, 113.
48. S.W. Richards, "Woman's Exponent," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no.11 (Jan. 15, 1894): 81.
49. Edwin T. Woolley, diary, May 14, 1905, Huntington Library.
50. Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 22, no. 3–4 (June 1999): 79. Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason, using a more sociological approach, back up this interpretation: "In our view, then, it is the anthropomorphic conception of God which is central to explaining the appearance of the Mormon Mother in Heaven belief. This anthropomorphism is not only an essential feature of the Mormon viewpoint, but seems to differentiate Mormon belief from superficially similar beliefs of Shakers and others." John Heeren, Donald B. Lindsey, and Marylee Mason, "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven: A Sociological Account of Its Origins and Development," *Journal for the Sociological Study of Religion* 23, no. 4 (Dec. 1984): 403.
51. Wilcox, for instance, notes: "A question to which there is as yet no definitive answer—but much speculation—is whether there is more than one Mother in Heaven. The Church's doctrinal commitment to plural marriage as well as the exigencies of producing at least billions of spirit children suggest the probability—some believe necessity—of more than one Mother in Heaven." Wilcox, "Mother in Heaven," 83.
52. B. Carmon Hardy, *The Solemn Covenan*t (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 349.
53. O. Kendall White, "Ideology of the Family in Nineteenth Century Mormonism," *Sociological Spectrum* 6 (1986): 289–306.
54. Aunt Ruth [Ruth May Fox?], "Woman's Sphere," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 4 (July 15, 1887): 29. In a similar vein, S.W. Richards justifies the separate "sphere" of women as originating in the innately different beings of

men and women. He writes: "Her acute sensitive temperament, her devotional nature, her noble qualities of heart and mind, are endowments which richly qualify her for the duties of several stations assigned. Though women is from and of the man [referring to the Genesis story of the creation of Eve from Adam's side], she is not the man, neither can she be. She is a separate and distinct creation, and has her sphere of action and duty, which requires both organization and powers the man does not possess. As a helpmate, she is not the slave of man." S. W. Richards, "Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 14 (Dec. 15, 1888): 109.

55. Wilcox, "Mother in Heaven," 81. In the past decade of so, the leadership of the church has, in fact, banned the practice of public prayer or mention of the Mother(s) in Heaven on the grounds that it is too sacred and secret a doctrine to speak of openly or to non-believers. Excommunication has followed for those not heeding this directive. Jan Shipps, "Dangerous History: Laurel Ulrich and her Mormon Sisters," *Christian Century* 110, no. 29 (Oct. 20, 1993): 1012–1015.
56. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon F. Lund, "Editor's Table: The Origin of Man," *Improvement Era* 13 (Nov. 1909): 78. Two pages later, the article states: "It [the doctrine] shows that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality." Smith, et al, "The Origin of Man," 80.
57. Wilcox, "Mother in Heaven," 79.
58. This feeling of reverence for Snow is demonstrated very clearly in a description of Snow's surprise entrance into the Salt Lake City fourteenth Ward Relief Society meeting not long before her death and after a long seclusion because of sickness. The meeting was instantly energized as the other women members apparently wept with joy at the sight of Snow: "surprise and joy suddenly filled every heart and lighted up each countenance. This happy effect was occasioned by the entering, unannounced, of Zion's venerable, honored and beloved Priestess and Poetess, Sister Eliza R. Snow Smith." The speaker immediately stopped her talk and all spontaneously began to sing Snow's hymn, "O, My Father," many then testifying to the spiritual power and authority of this "prophetess." L. G. R. [Lula Greene Richards?], "A Delightful Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1887): 68.
59. George D. Pyper, *Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns: Their Authors and Composers* (n.p.: George D. Pyper, 1939), 1. The first two verses of the hymn develop the necessary accompanying idea of a preexistence in which the Father and Mother Gods produced the spirit children who would later need to find earthly tabernacles:

> O my Father, Though that dwellest
> In the high and glorious place!
> When shall I regain Thy presence,
> And again behold Thy face?
> In Thy holy habitation,

Did my spirit once reside;
In my first primeval childhood
Was I nurtured near Thy side?

For a wise and glorious purpose
Thou hast placed me here on earth,
And withheld the recollection
Of my former friends and birth;
Yet ofttimes a secret something
Whispered, "You're a stranger here;"
And I felt that I had wandered
From a more exalted sphere.

60. L. L. Greene Richards, "A Thread of Thought," *Woman's Exponent* 29, nos. 6–7 (Aug. 15 and Sept. 1, 1900): 27. For an unusually extended description of the Mother in Heaven and her interactions with her spirit children in the preexistence, see: Laura Moench Jenkins, "Beyond the Portals," *The Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 6 (June 1916): 325–334.
61. Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* Maureen Uresenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (eds.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 12.
62. "Topics of the Times," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 20 (March 15, 1884): 157. See also: Rockwood, 11.
63. Two main camps on Eve appear in the literature of LDS women. On the one hand, the revisionists seek to renovate the figure of Eve completely—see below. On the other hand, authors and poets use the traditional interpretation of the curse as a terrible fall, but they adapt it, so that both men and women share the blame equally. Emily Hill Woodmansee takes this tack when she argues that throughout time women have been unfairly targeted for initiating the curse, but that this unfair burden has also been the salvation of humanity. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "Behold the Dawn," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 10 (Oct. 15, 1880): 73.
64. "Utah County Silk Association," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 7 (Sept. 1, 1880): 56.
65. Derr, 106.
66. Hermita, "Familiarity Breeds Contempt," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1881): 121. To further demonstrate the complexity and the shifting nature of the interpretation of Eve, later on in the essay, "Hermita" describes how Eve was tricked into eating the fruit by a wily Lucifer, using this as an example of why her readers should be careful about deceptive appearances and clearly here interpreting Eve's fall in a traditional, negative manner.
67. Madsen notes: "Moreover, Eve, though punished for telestializing the world, is exalted for leading the way toward the eventual celestializing of her posterity." Madsen, 92–93.
68. Mary Ann Pratt, "Give to Those Rigths to Whom Rights Belong," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 21 (April 1, 1880): 165. Hannah T. King reinforces this

view of Eve as the one who set in motion the process of life and salvation. She writes: "Eve, the sovereign mother of all living. She stands in close proximity to God the Father, for she is the life giving spirit of the innumerable hosts that have figured upon this earth. The one grand, stupendous act of her life is all that is told of her in the Bible, and it is enough." Hannah T. King, "Women of the Scriptures," *Woman's Exponent* 32, no. 6 (Nov. 1903): 41.

69. S. W. Richards, "Woman's Exponent," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 11 (Jan. 15, 1894): 81.
70. S. W. Richards, "Woman's Exponent," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 11 (Jan. 15, 1894): 81.
71. S. W. Richards, "Woman's Exponent," 81.
72. See Lehi's deathbed scene in the Book of Mormon for a fuller explanation of this LDS understanding of the necessary Fall, 2 Nephi 2: 22–28.
73. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 47–59.
74. Weber, 60–79.
75. For more information on this succession crisis, see: Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 186–195. See also: D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 143–185.
76. Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
77. For more information on the founding and early history of the Relief Society, see: Jill Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of the Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 23–58.
78. Linda King Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism,* Maxine Hanks (ed.) (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992). Derr also notes that official versions of the Relief Society history were revised in order to emphasize that women were to work under the direction of the priesthood. Jill Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 104.
79. Thomas Alexander, D. Michael Quinn, and others have convincingly described these changes and the accompanying narrowing of religious authority open to women within the church. D. Michael Quinn, "From Sacred Grove to Sacral Power Structure," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 2 (summer 1984); Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 127–136.
80. For another discussion of this process, see: Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition,* 294.
81. Eliza Roxcy Snow, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (ed.) (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 211.

82. "Interesting Trip South," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no.8 (Oct. 15, 1894): 196.
83. Juliaetta Bateman Jensen., *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway Printing Company and The Hiller Bookbinding Company, 1948), 162–163.
84. Thomas Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. For more details on the Polysophical Society, see: Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The Polysophical Society: A Phoenix Infrequent," *Encyclia* 58 (1981): 145–153.
2. In an *Exponent* article, Ellen B. Ferguson notes: "Arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake the dance to the Mormon, became almost like an institution, and the ball a social sacrament." Dr. Ellen B. Ferguson, "History of the Drama in Utah," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 12 (Feb. 1 & 15, 1894): 94.
3. For a book length treatment of Snow, see Beecher's edition of her personal writings: Eliza R. Snow, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (ed.) (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995). For article-length treatment, see: Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, 1 (1996–1997): 85–126.
4. See, for instance, Orson F. Whitney, "The Poet's Prayer," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1882): 30.
5. Hannah T. King, "A Response," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1882): 81.
6. For an example of this, see: "Recompense," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 21 (May 1, 1891): 161. See chapter six for examples of trials and tribulations as refining fires.
7. Eric A. Eliason, "Celebrating Zion: Pioneers in Mormon Popular Historical Expression" (dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 34.
8. Christopher Smith, et al, "Retracing the Trail," *Salt Lake Tribune* (1997 Special Commemorative Edition): 4.
9. Ryan Whitaker, "Following in My Ancestors' Footsteps," *Salt LakeTribune* (1997 Special Commemorative Edition): 8.
10. Whitaker, "Following in My Ancestors' Footstep," 8.
11. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
12. Snow, *Personal Writing*s, 19.
13. Beverly Seaton notes that, within the wider "culture of flowers" literature, cultivated nature very clearly symbolized the triumph of "civilization." Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 6.
14. Cox, autobiography, p. 34.
15. Cox, autobiography, p. 35.
16. Shipps, *Mormonism,* 121.

17. Sara Alexander, "A Little Story of the Experiences of Sara Alexander When Crossing the Plains in 1859," p. 2, Utah State Historical Society.
18. Alexander, "Little Story," p. 2.
19. Alexander, "Little Story," p. 3.
20. Alexander, "Little Story," p. 4.
21. Alexander, "Little Story," p. 4.
22. Olive Woolley Kimball, journals, March 21, 1900, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
23. Elvira Nash Parkinson, "Elvira Nash Parkinson," *Our Pioneer Heritage,* vol. 8, comp. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1965), 207.
24. Parkinson, "Elvira Nash Parkinson," 207–208. In her autobiographical sketch, Laura Smith Rice tells a similar story of struggle and redemption against and through nature. Laura Louisa Smith, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Laura Louisa Smith," p. 30, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. See also Anna F. Griffith's description of her move to Springville, Utah, and her joyful play in "greenery" and flowers she found there. Anna F. Griffith, diaries, April 26, 1912, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
25. Ray L. Alston, "Mary Ellen Holt Alston—Utah Native Pioneer," p. 3, Utah State Historical Society. For other firsthand accounts of pioneers eating Sego Lily roots for sustenance, see: Elizabeth Horrocks Baxter, Pioneer Personal History, Federal Writer's Project, p. 3, Utah State Historical Society; Manomas Lavina Gibson Andros, Pioneer Personal Interview, Utah Historic Records Survey, p. 4, Utah State Historical Society; Olive Cheney Aldous, Pioneer Personal History, Federal Writers Project, p. 2, Utah State Historical Society.
26. L. Lula Greene Richards, "The Sego Lily. Utah's Flower," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 9 (November 1, 1892): 65.
27. Juanita Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus,* 95.
28. Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus,* 111.
29. Shira Wolosky, "The Claims of Rhetoric: Toward a Historical Poetics (1820–1900)," *American Literary History* (2003): 14–21; Paula Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women's Poetry, 1800–1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).
30. M., "Literary Women of Utah. Thoughts on 'Homespun Talk,'" *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 4 (July 15, 1884): 31.
31. M. "Literary Women of Utah," 31. Not surprisingly, words, both written and spoken, were also frequently compared to seeds that could produce either positive or negative fruits. See: E.S.D., "Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 2 (June 15, 1882): 11.
32. Orson F. Whitney, "Poets and Poetry," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1886): 81.

33. "To Sister Eliza," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1884): 129.
34. Hattie F. Clough, "Poetry," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1882): 71.
35. Hannah T. King, "A Response," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1882): 81. For the idea of poetic talents as divine inspiration, see also: Emily Scott, "To Mary J. Tanner," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 15 (Jan. 1, 1884): 115.
36. Clara H. James, Rida Taylor, L. Greene Richards, "Lines," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 20 (March 15, 1887): 155.
37. LDS women authors make clear that they do not think that any earthly expression or experience can fully and truthfully capture the reality of heavenly life. In the essay, "Love of Nature," Emmeline B. Wells meditates on the beauty and message of nature and argues that, through looking to nature, those with the true poetic nature and sensitivity are lifted to heights of literary brilliance and divine revelation. But she tempers this assertion with the realization that not everyone has this talent, and that even those with this talent fall short of fully conveying the reality of the heavenly paradise. One must wait for eternity to participate in the bliss of full and unhampered expression and experience. [Emmeline B. Wells?], "Love of Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 23 (May 1, 1883): 180.
38. Ian G. Barber, "Mormon Women 'Natural' Seers: An Enduring Legacy," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism,* Maxine Hanks (ed.) (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 167–194.
39. See Snow's entry for January 1, 1848, for an example of the meeting at which men were present and participated, and at which women spoke in tongues. Snow, *Personal Writings,* 215–216.
40. Birdie Clyde, "Some of the Best Authors," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 22 (April 15, 1889): 169.
41. Clough, "Poetry," 71.
42. Ruby Lamont, "Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Browning," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 20 (March 15, 1887): 153.
43. A non-Mormon woman who for a time held a running conversation with LDS women in the pages of the *Exponent,* Emily Scott had strikingly similar praise for the recent work of LDS poet, Augusta Joyce Crocheron. Emily Scott, "Two Books," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 2 (June 15, 1882): 11. See also: Orson Whitney, "Poets and Poetry," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1886): 81.
44. Ann Douglas has also observed that nineteenth-century American women writers tended to choose vegetative pseudonyms. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 186.
45. Probably the best, most condensed use of flower pseudonyms can be seen in a poetic exchange between "Geranium" and "Hyacinth" in the poem "I Come. To Hyacinth." Appropriately, one verse of the poem talks about the two creating beautiful wreaths of (poetic?) flowers in an idyllic natural setting. Geranium, "I Come,' *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 11 (Dec. 1, 1894): 209.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. E. R. S. [Ellis R. Shipp?], "Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 7 (Sept. 1, 1889): 49. For an example of a male employing this symbolic triangle, see: R. W. S., "Some Suggestive Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 4 (July 15, 1886): 27.
2. Sherry Ortner, "So, *Is* Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 179.
3. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi.
4. Tompkins, xvi.
5. Lucy, "Back to Other Days," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 9 (Oct. 15, 1890): 65. In a similar vein, speaking of a young girl, "Amelia," in the story, "Her Mother's Christmas Gift," describes the delicate beauty of the daughter, Bess, through the tool of flower and nature imagery. She writes: "Her bright blue eyes and pink cheeks were not coarsely pretty, but the coloring was as delicate as the petals of a tea rose and the blue of the heavens between the stars." Amelia, "Her Mother's Christmas Gift," *Woman's Exponent* 29, no. 14 (Dec. 15, 1900): 57. For other descriptions of young girls as beautiful flowers see: Lula Greene Richards, "Seventeen and Seventy-One," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1889): 100; Lydia D. Alder, "In the Celestial City. A Reverie," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 11 (Jan. 15, 1894): 81.
6. Flowers were not always identified as young girls—they could also occasionally represent boys, or, more generally, children. In a biography of Eliza Dorsey Ashworth, for instance, the author (great grand-daughter) Sadie Leffler Russon describes a dream that Eliza had not long after she converted to Mormonism in England. In the dream, she crossed a bridge holding two white roses, one of which she dropped. Eliza specifically connected this dream to the death of a son by drowning many years later in Utah. Sadie Leffler Russon, "Life Sketch of Eliza Dorsey Ashworth," pp. 1–3, Utah State Historical Society.
7. "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 1 (July 1, 1892: 8. See also: S. R. E., "Maggie," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (Oct. 15 and Nov. 1, 1893): 49. See also: Hyacinth, "A Rosebud," *Woman's Exponent* 25, no. 13 (Jan. 1 1897): 97; Ellis R. Shipp, "The Healer," *Woman's Exponent* 32, no. 12 (May 1904): 89.
8. J. C. Howe and Ella Dallas, "A Loved One Passed Away. Nettie S. Alder," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1890): 142. Tragically, another Alder girl, Helen Alder, 18, had to be memorialized in similar fashion. "She ever reminded me of a delicate tea rose just burst forth, and, oh! so sweet and fragrant, but open the door and let the frost touch it or expose it to the too fierce rays of the sun, and it will droop, fall, and die." Julia Cruse Howe, "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 21 (April 1, 1883): 166.

9. Her Mother, "On the Fly-Leaf of Her Book," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 10 (Oct. 15, 1884): 73. In similar fashion, Phebe C. Young, one of Brigham Young's plural wives, argued against the then common metaphor of women as the clinging, delicate, flowery vines growing around the sturdy oaks of their husbands. Phoebe Young, "Reasons Why," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1889): 93. A couple years later another Exponent author denounced the idea that women should think of themselves as clinging vines. Frances, "Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 8 (Oct. 15, 1891): 57.
10. D & C 131: 7–8.
11. Elaine Goodale, "Nearest Heaven," *Apple-Blossoms,* 130–131. For another example of describing the innocence of youth, see: "Violets," *Ladies Repository* 1, 6 (June 1875): 436.
12. Sister Plunket, "A Welcome. Inscribed to My Little Nieces Who Live in Juab Co., Utah," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 21 (April 1, 1880): 163. For another description of a girl as a flowery gift from heaven, see: Lydia D. Alder, "In the Celestial City. A Reverie," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 11 (Jan. 15, 1894): 81.
13. Perhaps the most effective and prolific writer of memorial poetry among LDS women was Eliza R. Snow. Her trail journal is full of poetry written in honor of those who had passed away, and often produced specifically for the comfort of the grieving relatives. See, for instance, Snow, *Personal Writings,* 84, 97–99, 147, 149, 150, 152, 163–164.
14. Colenda Chrilla Rogers Adams, diary, p. 1, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
15. Adams, diary, p. 1.
16. Florence Dean Ridges, journal, May 1887-December 1888, July 23, 1887 (frame 22), Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
17. For an example of this Victorian interest in naming women after flowers, see: Sarah C. Carter, *Lexicon of Ladies Names with Their Floral Emblems* (Boston: J. Buffum, 1852). Though this book does not contain many floral names, it does attach certain flowers to women's names and gives their symbolic meanings.
18. Anna F. Griffiths, diaries 1920–1941, September 1917, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
19. Griffiths, diaries 1920–1941, June 26, 1919.
20. As with most of the literary evidence cited in this book, there are far too many instances in the sources to give a full and complete listing of places in which nature is configured as female, the following pages will bear witness to the almost ubiquitous identification. The following are a few instances, however, within the *Exponent* where nature as a whole is identified as female: Louisa Picket, "Ode to the Pioneers," *Woman's Exponen*t 16, no. 13, (Dec. 1, 1887): 97 ("Queen Nature"); E. B. Wells, "The Autumn,"

Woman's Exponent 71, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1885): 65 ("Dame Nature"); E. B. Wells, "Hepzibah. XVI," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 19 (March 1, 1890): 146 ("all of nature was donning her beautiful vestments"); Dr. E.S. Barney, "Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 23 (May 1, 1890): 181 ("*Nature's Laws* have ever taught me, that,/ In her was something grand, sublime,—Godlike").

21. Mary Ann Mansfield Bentley, "Life Sketch of Mary Ann Mansfield Bentley," p. 14, Utah State Historical Society.
22. L. M. Hewlings, "An April Idyl," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 21 (April 1, 1882): 161. For other descriptions of nature as an anthropomorphized woman, see: E. B. W. [Emmeline B. Wells?], "Hepzibah. XVI," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 19 (March 1, 1890): 146; Queenie Scott Harper, "Earth-Mother," *Woman's Exponent* 41, no. 11 (Nov. 1913): 75.
23. Florence Dean Ridges regularly noted down in her journal her round of household chores. On January 20, 1895, she recapped a week busily spent in washing, sewing, hosting visitors, ironing, darning, and mending. Florence Dean Ridges, journal Aug. 1893-June 1896, p. 111, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In June of that same year, she encapsulated her week's work into one short sentence: "Have spent the past week busily as usual sewing, washing, ironing, etc., etc." Ridges, p. 124.
24. Hannah T. King, "Our God Is Great and Nature Is His Prophet," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1882): 41. See also: Dr. E. S. Barney, "Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 23 (May 1, 1890): 181; E. B. Wells, "At Evening," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 3 (Aug. 1, 1891): 19; E. H. Lyon, "Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 17 (May 15, 1894): 130.
25. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 213–214.
26. D & C 7: 48; for another Mormon scriptural identification of the earth as female, see also in the Book of Mormon: Helaman 11: 17.
27. Aunt Em, "Awakening of Spring," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 20 (April 1, 1889): 163. See also: M. F. K., "A Spring Song," *Woman's Exponent* 33, no. 11 (May 1905): 82.
28. For an example of a poem dedicated to female-identified April and May respectively see, for instance: E. B. Wells, "Coquettish April," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 22 (April 15, 1890): 173; Lucy May Green, "In April," *The Relief Society Magazine* 5, no. 4 (April 1918): 209–210; Martha A. Gaulton, "May. Addressed to Bishop O. F. Whitney," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 1883): 3.
29. Hannah T. King, "Reminiscences," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 1881): 9. For other poems describing June, see: E. H. Woodmansee, "Joyful June," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 2 (June 15, 1883): 9; Emily Scott, "June," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 4 (July 15, 1883): 32.
30. Aunt Em, "Suggestive Days," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1880): 93. See also: A. W. C., "An Easter Song," *Woman's Exponent* 33, no. 10 (April 1905): 73; H. T. King, "A Reverie," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 15 (Jan. 1, 1885): 114.

31. For a description of nourishing summer see, for instance: Madeline S. Bridges, "July: The Year's Sweetheart," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 2 (July 15, 1891): 9. For a poetic description of autumn, see, for instance: Lue, "Autumn," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no 10 (Nov. 15, 1891): 73.
32. Aretta, "Thorns and Roses," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1889): 101. See also: Augusta Joyce Crocheron, "The Flowers," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 23 (May 1, 1880): 179. She writes:

    > Winter had rapped his ermine robe
    > Around him and was gone;
    > And spring, flush with loveliness,
    > Greeted the rosy dawn.

    Another example of this clear opposition between male and female natural elements, in this case the seasons, can be seen in the comment by "Hattie" on an especially cool spring/summer: "June came but not decked with roses, for she was accompanied by her stately lover, chilly December." Hattie, "A Little Girl's Letter," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 2 (July 15, 1891): 9.
33. Lu Dalton, "Winter Winds," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1880): 121.
34. Hannah T. King, "Autumn, 1883," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1883): 65.
35. The lines of gendered, natural opposition are again blurred by other male-identified elements of nature which are much more explicitly or potentially beneficial. These forces, most prominently the sun, actually act to outline the above opposition within an overarching framework. "Sunset Picture" by Hope depicts the benevolent and all-powerful force of the sun, or "king of Day," as the conqueror of darkness and trouble. Hope, "Sunset Picture," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1881): 81.
36. For an example of an implicitly female Hope, see: "The Spinning Wheel," *The Ladies Repository* 1, 2 (January 1875): 131.
37. Hannah T. King, "Fragments of Epistolary Correspondence," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1883): 97. Faith and hope are similarly personified as helpmates of God who lead the believer on the right path, even through the difficulties and challenges inherent in mortal life. Faith becomes an angelic guide and protector:

    > But Faith alone, with brow serene,
    > Stands by my side and points the way;
    > And all the drifted clouds between
    > Grow bright and luminous as day.

    G.A. Karrick, "Faith,' *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 20 (March 15, 1880): 155. Hope is a close sister to faith in providing comfort and guidance to the spiritually faltering and discouraged. Hope will, "pointing with the finger of inherent inspiration to the illimitable future, lift one unconsciously above the petty scenes and trials of to-day." "What Is Happiness?" *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 20 (March 15, 1880): 156.

38. Hannah T. King, "Meditations," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 10 (Jan. 1, 1881): 113. In a similar vein, "Hope" describes memory as a kind of gift from the higher realms that intervenes in the sorrows and troubles of the present, like the perfume of a flower. Hope, "Passing Away," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 19 (March 1, 1888): 147.
39. Hannah T. King, "Memory the Curse or Blessing of Existence," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1882): 89.
40. See, for instance, Hyacinth, "Hidden Pearls," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 4 (Aug. 15, 1892): 27. See also: Bishop O. F. Whitney, "The Jubilee of Zion," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 7 (Sept. 1 1880): 50; Emily B. Spencer, "The Fiery Dragon," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 22 (April 15, 1882): 171; Charlotte Cruse Thorpe, "Truth," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1889): 131.
41. Lu Dalton, "Hark! The Tidings," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1887): 137.
42. Mrs. Deborah Billings, "Lines in Memory of Sister M. J. Tanner," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 20 (March 15, 1890): 157.
43. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "Our Hopes Are in Thee. A Song in the Night," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1881): 137.
44. Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "An Obstacle," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 21 (May 1, 1891): 163.
45. For justice as male, see: "A Daily Sacrifice," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1881): 121–122. For freedom as male, see: Lu Dalton, "Hark! The Tidings," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1887): 137. For pleasure as female, see: "Growing Old," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 4 (July 15, 1886): 25. For ignorance as female, see: Deborah Billings, "Lines in Memory of Sister M. J. Tanner," 18, no. 20 (March 15, 1890): 157.
46. Emile, "Something to Live For," *Woman's Exponen*t 8, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1880): 123. For other examples of the negative use of the symbol of the flower, see: *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 4 (July 15, 1882): 25; Lucy A. Clark, "Friendship. To Mrs. Aurelia S. Rogers," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1889): 139; James H. Wallis, "Life," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 89 (Sept. 15, 1883): 59. Even Wells, probably the biggest fan of the flower as a positive symbol, sometimes also presents it as a symbol of the evanescence of human life. In "Leaf, Bud and Flower," she considers the laissez-faire attitude that most people mistakenly hold towards frail, mortal life and points to the flower as the most effective lesson of change and decay. Emmeline B. Wells, "Leaf, Bud, and Flower," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 2 (June 15, 1883): 11.
47. Aunt Em, "Holiday Times," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1883): 99.
48. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "What Does It Matter to Me?" *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1882): 65. In another poem, Woodmansee warns against the easy and alluring ways of female Fashion. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "A Blessing instead of a Ban," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 14 (Dec. 15, 1883): 105.

49. Emmeline B. Wells, "What They Say," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1883): 92. In another pro-polgyamy article, Wells makes Rumor the naughty, trouble-making female who is pitted against the LDS community, but, more specifically, against good LDS women. [Emmeline B. Wells?], "Editorial Chat," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1883): 124. For discussion of Angie Newman and her campaign against Mormon polygamy, see: Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 24–28, 63–64.
50. Hannah T. King, "Silent Voices," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 20 (March 15, 1883): 155. Many poems and essays by LDS women describe the mystical experience of God within nature. See, for instance, Dr. E. S. Barney, "Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 23 (May 1, 1890): 181. For Wells, nature also speaks of God and the infinite, but for her, this speaking is truly is only a foretaste, it sets people on the right track by revealing just a bit of what eternity will be like. It acts a kind of carrot on a stick, or a beacon to the spiritually thirsty. Emmeline B. Wells, "Love of Nature," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 23 (May 1, 1883): 180.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. "Selected," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 21 (April 1, 1890): 165.
2. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977); Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
3. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
4. Wilcox notes that, beginning in the early twentieth century and increasing as time went on, the central leadership of the church increasingly focused on and praised motherhood as a role for women. Linda P. Wilcox, "Mormon Motherhood: Official Images," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (eds.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 211–212.
5. Aunt Ruth, "Our Children," *Woman's Exponent* vol. 15, no. 24 (May 15, 1887): 189. Eliza D. Gibbs, in "Faith, Hope, and Charity," restates this assumption of responsibility in more straightforward and optimistic terms noting that good mothers will receive divine praise for their parenting work. Eliza D. Gibbs, "Faith, Hope, and Charity," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 13 (Jan. 1, 1892): 102.
6. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1992), 118–119.
7. Wilcox, 209.
8. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "True Wives and True Mothers," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 14 (Dec. 15, 1881): 107. See also: Lorena, "Mother,"

Woman's Exponent 8, no. 24 (May 15, 1880); Annie G. Lauritzen, "The Crown that I would Wear," *The Relief Society Magazine* 2, no. 11 (Nov. 1915): 518.

9. This sentiment—that women are not properly and publicly acknowledged—is expressed many times and in many different ways. For another version, see "A Visit to the Country" by "Sun Flower" in which the author describes a happy, polygamist home where none of the twelve, almost-grown children have died—an extremely unusual circumstance at that time and for such a large family. One of the purposes of the story is to argue that those who practice plural marriage will be blessed with many and healthy children, but the writer also works in some appreciation for faithful and long-suffering motherhood. Sun Flower, "A Visit to the Country," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 3 (July 1, 1884): 117.
10. Wells and others make clear that one of the express purposes of the *Exponent,* for instance, is to ensure that the words and deeds of women will not be forgotten. Hannah T. King argues that women's lives "have been 'hid with Christ in God;' theirs has in most cases been the 'unwritten philosophy of the nineteenth century.'" She, however, is certain that this will change and that women will be recognized for their achievements, at least within the LDS church. Hannah T. King, "The Character and Calibre of Women," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 22 (April 15, 1880): 170.
11. Louis May Ison was atypical in that she married relatively late—in her mid-twenties—but she was typical in that after she got married she had children at intervals of approximately two years. Born in 1887, she married in June 1913, had her first son in April 1914, second son in August 1916, first daughter in April 1918, another daughter in February 1921, another son in October 1922, another daughter in November 1924, and a last daughter in 1927. Louie May Savage Ison, "Story of My Life," pp. 15, 17, 19, 21, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though she married much younger, in her late-teen years, Martha Cragun Cox's birth pattern is quite similar, interrupted only when her husband was sent to jail in 1881. She was born in 1852, married in November 1869, and had a daughter in January 1871, another daughter in May 1872, a son in June 1874, another son in September 1876, a daughter in October 1878, a daughter in October 1880, a daughter in November 1884, and a last daughter in July 1886. Martha Cragun Cox, autobiography, pp. 127, 131, 134, 135, 138, 141, 175, 177, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
12. Mary F., "The Patriarchal Order of Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1882): 121.
13. Home-Spun, "Her Dream," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 3 (July 1, 1882): 19. Substantially less optimistically, "E. J." describes, in "Unmarried," the internal plight of an unmarried and childless woman who yearns for the "Eden" of family life and describes herself as "a withered bough, a blasted

smitten fruit." E. J., "Unmarried," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 8 (Oct. 1, 1890): 59.

14. Those who were mothers during their mortal existence would also continue in this role during the afterlife. An obituary for Mrs. Rhoda M. Carrington, for instance, notes that she was the mother of fifteen children, of whom nine had died. The sadness of her death and the deaths of so many of her children is balanced in the obituary by a vision of Carrington's life in the Spirit World with her lost "treasures." Lydia D. Alder, "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1886): 46.
15. S. W. Richards, "Mother, Home, and Heaven," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 20 (April 15, 1891): 153.
16. S. W. Richards, "Woman's Sphere," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 17 (May 15, 1894): 129.
17. LDS women writers often emphasize that Jesus Christ in his resurrected state first appeared to a woman in order to argue for the overall importance of women within the church and plan of salvation. See, for instance: Lu Dalton, "Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 14 (Jan. 15, 1893): 107.
18. Hannah T. King writes of the weighty consequences of motherhood: "We there raise up the young scions of humanity for time and eternity, and no seeds must be sown there that will hereafter produce evil, perhaps sevenfold; no weeds allowed to grow that will choke the progress of tender plants that sojourn therein. Such a course will form an education for future life that the learning of the schools can never give." Hannah T. King, "Babyhood," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 8 (Sept. 15, 1880): 62.
19. Aunt Em, "Faith," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 21 (April 1, 1880): 163.
20. Laura C. Pack, "To Mother Woodward on Her Seventieth Birthday," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 11 (Nov. 1, 1880): 83.
21. Farnsworth notes that this parallelism between priesthood and motherhood is explicitly made in today's church, but women writers implied this role separation even in the nineteenth century. Sonja Farnsworth, "Mormonism's Odd Couple: The Priesthood-Motherhood Connection," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism,* Maxine Hanks (ed.) (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 299–314. See also, Carolyn M. Wallace, "The Priesthood and Motherhood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols,* Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman (eds.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 120.
22. Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
23. For instance, Olive Woolley Kimball, assisted by other local women, made many of the burial clothes for members of her community when they died. Though she was part of the local Relief Society leadership, there is no evidence that she was set aside for this particular role. Olive Woolley Kimball, journal, December 29, 1899; February 2, 1901; May 21, 1901, Archives

and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

24. S. E. R., "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 4 (Aug. 15, 1891): 32.
25. C. Daniels, "Utah Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1890): 136. In a similar vein, Lu Dalton writes that women are: "First to greet lovingly man at his birth/ Last to forsake him when dying[.]" Lu Dalton, "Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 14 (Jan. 15, 1893): 107.
26. E. B. Wells, "Live for a Purpose," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 22 (April 15, 1881): 171.
27. E. B. Wells, "Live for a Purpose," 171. In another *Exponent* article, "Beatrice" uses this garden analogy and compares the care of souls to the care of flowers. Beatrice "Flowers," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 3 (July 1, 1882): 18.
28. Camelia, "Home Influence," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 23 (May 1, 1880): 177. Cannon's mother, Emmeline B. Wells gives a much more extended explanation of the influence of the home on the early and subsequent character of boys and girls. Aunt Em, "The Influences of the Home," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 8 (September 15, 1881): 62.
29. M. Elizabeth Little, "Woman's Rights and Mission," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 20 (March 15, 1880): 159.
30. M. Elizabeth Little, "A Day-Dream," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 4 (July 15, 1884): 26. See also: Augusta Joyce Crocheron, "Helen and Virginia," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 5 (Aug. 1, 1884): 35. Here, the scent of the clustering flowers serves to signal an entrance into a happy and good home.
31. A. W. C., "The Old Home," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 22 (April 15, 1888): 173.
32. A. W. C., "The Old Home," 173.
33. E. T., "From Home," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 7 (Sept. 1, 1888): 51.
34. Sexton notes a similar connection between cultivated flowers and civilization within the contemporary "language of flowers" literature. Beverly Sexton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 6.
35. T. W. Higginson, "The Dying House," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 22 (April 15, 1888): 169.
36. Similarly, for Martha Cragun Cox, the full impact of the federal government's prosecution of the practice of polygamy was symbolized by the death of her sister wife Lizzie's garden when Lizzie was forced to go into hiding during the height of the campaign in 1888–1889. Martha Cragun Cox, autobiography, p. 81, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
37. Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondon* (New York: Tullidge and Crandell, 1877 [1965 photolithographic reprint]), 357.
38. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 4 (July 15, 1881): 25.
39. Hope, "Our Twenty-Fourth," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1887): 43.

40. Richard Jackson argues that this focus on Utah as a transformed desert was deliberately cultivated by church leaders who, by posthumously and incorrectly presenting the Salt Lake Valley as a transformed desert, wished to encourage Mormon pioneers to settle the harsher, drier regions of southern Utah. Richard Jackson, "Utah's Harsh Lands, Hearth of Greatness," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 (1981): 9.
41. Ellen Jakeman, "The Pioneers," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 3 (Aug. 1, 1892): 17. For other descriptions of pre-Mormon Utah as a waste or desert, see: "Pioneer Day," *Woman's Exponent* 15 no. 5 (Aug. 1, 1886): 36; Hyacinth, "Freedom's Echo," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 15 (Feb. 1, 1893): 113; E. B. Wells, "Woman's Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 21 no. 24 (June 15, 1893): 178.
42. Ellen Jakeman, "The Pioneers," 17.
43. As pointed out by Henry Nash Smith, the description of the West as both garden and desert was a common literary trope in nineteenth century (and earlier) American literature. Also known was the idea that settling the land with virtuous/ chosen communities favorably changed the physical environment and climate of the land. The LDS community, then, was utilizing a common trope, but placing it within a LDS history and context. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 176–180.
44. For another example of the introduction of the Mormon community into the Salt Lake Valley described as the introduction of abstract virtues see: Lu Dalton, "Hark! The Tidings," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1887): 137.
45. L. M. Hewling, "Fancy's Roaming," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 1883): 1.
46. The description continues with more details about "sweet faced children" playing in the flower-filled homes. Beatrice, "Flowers," *Woman's Exponent* 11 no. 3 (July 1, 1882): 18.
47. For a fuller description of these theological beliefs, see, for instance: Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 186.
48. Lydia D. Alder, "Evening Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 23 (May 1, 1896): 147. In other places, LDS women concentrate on the preexistence as a happy and carefree life in a beautiful land accompanied with other pure and innocent spirit children. See, for instance: C. L. Walker, "Lines," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1888): 143.
49. Joseph L. Barfoot, "Old Letter," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1883): 103.
50. For a longer description of this doctrine, see: Moses 3:4–9.
51. Joseph L. Barfoot, "Old Letter," 103.
52. E. B. W., "Shadows and Whisperings," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1888): 41. For other examples of descriptions of preexistence as a garden-like and idealized home life see: Lydia D. Alder, "Birthday Greetings," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 17 (May 15, 1894): 131; L. L. Greene

Richards, "Our Home Above," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 15–16 (Feb. 1 and 15, 1895): 233.

53. "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 15 (Jan. 1, 1880): 117. For other examples of this oft-repeated trope, see: L. M. Hewlings, "Requiem," *Woman's Exponent* 18 no. 5 (Aug. 1, 1889): 33; E. B. Wells, "Summer Vacation," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no.1 (July 1, 1891): 1.
54. James Clark draws out this symbolic parallelism even more clearly and specifically in "Leona," a poem in which the narrator describes a journey to the paradisiacal afterlife. James Clark, "Leona," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1881): 43.
55. Jane Kartchner Morris, journals and reminiscences, volume 3, p. 119, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Writing somewhat after the target period, Ison mixes the quotidian facts of earthly existence with a hope for the eternal future as she describes her attempts at creating and tending a garden around her home. She notes: "We planted rows of Iris along the new fence on the north and east side of the house. When they bloomed that summer we had gorgeous blossoms of purple, blue, pink, and yellow. I hope they have Adalias and Iris in heaven for Father will be there to help me raise them. He knows just how to do it and I do not." Louie May Ison, autobiography, p. 22, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
56. For more information on the development of temple ceremonies, see: Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (eds.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).
57. "R. S. Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 25, no. 14, 15 (Jan. 15, Feb. 1, 1897): 102.
58. "L.D.S. Women's Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 8 (Oct. 1, 1890): 62.
59. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1912), 274–285.
60. "The Temple Service of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," p. 9, George B. Arbaugh Collection, box 1, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago.
61. S. W. Richards, "Mother, Home, and Heaven," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 20 (April 15, 1891): 153.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. "In Memoriam. Harriet Canfield Brown," *Woman's Exponent* 36, no. 7 (Feb. 1908): 41.
2. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 163, 180–183, 185;

Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 194–5; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), xiv.

3. Tompkins, 185.
4. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), xiv.
5. R. M .F., "The Daughters of Zion," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 23 (May 1, 1889): 177. See also: Hope, "Query," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 20 (March 15, 1880): 153; M. A. M. Pratt, "Questions Answered," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 21 (April 1, 1882): 162; Maud Dobson, "Zion," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 8 (Aug. 1917): 432; "Guide Lessons," *The Relief Society Magazine* 5, no. 9 (April 1918): 236.
6. Emily Hill Woodmansee, " Wherefore and Why?" *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 22 (April 15, 1880): 169. See also: Addie Heath, "Fannie Fern," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 24 (May 15, 1880): 191; Ruth May Fox, "My Fortieth Year," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (Oct. 15 & Nov. 1, 1893): 49; E. B. Wells, "Sorrow and Tears," *Woman's Exponent* 41, no. 14 (Feb. 1914): 97.
7. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of American*s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25–47.
8. [Emmeline B. Wells?], "Approaching the Narrows," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1886): 92.
9. Using this same idea of suffering as pressing or unbearable outside pressure, during a quarterly conference of the Sanpete Stake, Agnes Armstrong, in 1890, encouraged her listeners: "The roses of the field will not give forth their sweetness until they are pressed to death and then we realize how precious is the perfume, as with us, we are tried and proven to see if we possess the true elements of salvation." "R.S. Reports. Uintah Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no 23 (May 1, 1890): 185.
10. Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 456.
11. Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway Printing Company and The Hiller Bookbinding Company, 1948), 132.
12. Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography of Annie Clark Tanner* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, 1991), 161.
13. Martha Cragun Cox, autobiography, p. 127, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
14. Cox, p. 136.
15. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 91.
16. Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 14.
17. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 223.

18. Florence Ridges Dean, journal, 1893–1896, pp. 51–52, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Juliaetta Jensen tells a somewhat similar story about her older sister, Marinda, who entered polygamy as the second wife at sixteen years old. Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway Printing Company and The Hiller Bookbinding Company, 1948), 58–63.
19. She wrote: "I feel very lonly and cant help going over the scenes of babies life and death. I long for her more and more as time passes. She would have been 11 months tomorrow if she had lived." Florence Ridges Dean, journal, 1887–1888, frame 18, July 2, 1887, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
20. Florence Ridges Dean, journal, 1887–1888, frames 87–89, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
21. For more details about the strategies LDS women used to deal with these difficulties, see: Gordon, 161–163.
22. The journals of Mormon women are filled with sad stories of lost children. Martha Cragun Cox lost a daughter in 1890. Martha Cragun Cox, autobiography, p. 191, Archives and Manuscript Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sarah McMurrin Hilton lost an infant daughter, and, like Dean, spent much of her missionary time in the Pacific islands mourning for her child. Sarah McMurrin Hilton, journals, 1892–1893, January 4, 1893, Archives and Manuscript Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
23. Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, journals, May 4, 1868, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
24. Hindley, Jan. 28, 1890.
25. Lu Dalton, "The One Doubt," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 1 (July 1 and 15 1893): 1.
26. Eliza E. Gibbs, "Why Should We Doubt," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 5 (Sept. 15, 1893): 35.
27. Jeanette Paton, "Retribution," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1887): 131. Emily Hill Woodmansee gives a similar assurance to her readers when she tells them that God will avenge the sufferings of Zion in full measure. Emily Hill Woodmansee, "There's No Retreating," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 18 (Feb. 15, 1883): 137.
28. "Editorial Notes," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1887): 133. See also, M. E. Teasdale, "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 9 (Oct. 1, 1887): 65; "A Loving Tribute," *Woman's Exponent* 40, no. 3 (Oct. 1911): 19; S. Y. Gates, "Our Lovely Human Heritage. President Emmeline B. Wells," *Relief Society Magazine* 4, no. 2 (Feb. 1917): 74–75.
29. S. M. P, "Thoughts and Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 23 (May 1, 1884): 181. See also: Nellie, "Lovingly Inscribed," *Woman's Exponent*

25, no. 3 (July 1896): 16; "Ladies' Semi-Monthly Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 28, no. 8 & 9 (Sept. 15 & Oct. 1, 1899): 56.

30. John L. Brooke has documented the influence of hermetic philosophy on early Mormon belief and practice. John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Within the literature and poetry of LDS women at this time, perhaps this influence accounts for the widespread use of metallurgical processes of refining to describe how women and men will become perfect through the endurance and understanding of suffering and trials.
31. S. E. R., "For Belle," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 5 (Aug. 1, 1888): 35. See also: "Recompense," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 21 (May 1, 1891): 161; "Out of Death Life is Born," *The Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 10 (Oct. 1916): 585.
32. Ruth, "Trust in Heaven," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 2 (June 15, 1884): 9. LDS women writers often compare their earthly trials and tribulations to those of Jesus Christ. See, for instance: M. L. M., "Mrs. Scott," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 2 (June 15, 1882): 10.
33. "Beautiful Tribute to Motherhood," *Woman's Exponent* 35, no. 8 (March 1907): 57.
34. Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondon* (New York: Tullidge and Crandell, 1877 (1965 photolithographic reprint)), 540. Using an Old Testament model, Zina D. H. Young, exhorted Mormon women with a similar message: "Isaiah says the daughters of Zion shall be polished after the similitude of a palace, and this will be brought about by all doing their duty, and may all have the gift of wisdom with power to overcome that we may have faith to feed the flocks that they faint not." Zina D. H. Young, "Letter to the Sisters," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 7 (Sept. 15, 1890): 54.
35. Susan Schreiner points out that in many forms of Christianity there was a general understanding that the animals and nature became wild and untamed after the Fall and after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden. Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?: Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 143.
36. M. E. S., "The Legend of the Rose," *Woman's Exponent* 31, no. 5–6 (Aug. 1 and 15, 1902): 24.
37. L. M. Hewlings, "The Sad Message," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 6 (Jan. 15, 1881): 121.
38. L. E. W., "Home," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 8 (Sept. 15, 1881): 63. For another example of thorn imagery, see: E. B. Wells, "Live for a Purpose," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 22 (April 15, 1881): 171. See also: "The Loved and Lost," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 17 (Feb. 1, 1880): 131; Louise Coulson, "On the Desert," *Woman's Exponent* 33, no. 8 (Feb. 1905): 57; "Editorial. Self Pity," *The Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1916): 524.
39. Millicent, "Onward," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 12 (Nov. 15, 1884): 89. See also: E. R. Shipp, "The Good Old Days," *Woman's Exponent* 36, no. 8

(April 1908): 59; R. M. F., "Myrtle and Violets," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 23 (May 1, 1896): 145.

40. Emmeline B. Wells gives a more in-depth explanation for why youth and spring are so often equated—both are times of innocence and promise. Aunt Em, "Pleasant Springtime," *Woman's Exponent* 8 no. 23 (May 1, 1880): 179.
41. Similarly, as an adult, Mary Susannah Fowler, midwife and informal doctor of her southern Arizona town, during a rare vacation—a break from her adult responsibilities—returned (regressed?) symbolically to the carefree life of a child when she chose to use her free time to wander the fields, gathering flowers. On the first day when she visited one of her teenaged sons at his work on a sheep camp, she took two other of her adolescent boys on a trip to the fields and noted in her diary: "Eben, Harry and my self gathered medicinal herbs, and pretty flowers." Mary Susannah Fowler, diary, July 21, 1900, University of Utah Manuscripts Collection. The next day, however, she went out on her own, purely for pleasure and relaxation: "Walked untill I was tired gathered my arms full of flowers and climbed on to a rock to rest where I am now seated." Fowler, July 22, 1900. The symbolic trope of picking flowers was powerful at least partly because it had real-world resonance. Actual experiences of picking flowers served as the touchstone of power for this symbolic trope.
42. Ellis D. Coombs, "History of My Life," p. 8, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
43. E. R. Shipp, M.D., "Correspondence," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 2 (June 15, 1880): 15.
44. See also: L. M. Hewling, "Happy Childhood," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 1. See also an essay on May Day: "How we ransacked the dim old woods for the rarest posies, and clambered and toiled over rocky cliffs for the choicest ferns, and then in the noontide rest we sought the shadiest dell and refreshed ourselves with the dainties provided by our dear mothers, and slacked our thirst at the clear, cold, crystal spring. . . . O, the happy, healthy, tired girls and boys of long ago, when we went Maying. Long may the memories live in our hearts, and, like the scent of lavender in old presses, bring up, like the breath of soft summer air and glint of blue skies, only happy recollections." Mysotis, "May Day," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 23 (May 1, 1887): 180–181.
45. Emile, "Sweet Memories," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 1 (June 1, 1887): 1. See also: L. M. Hewlings, "Impromptu Lines," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 22 (April 15, 1889): 171.
46. L. E. W., "Home," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 8 (Sept. 8, 1881): 63. See also: A. W. Cannon, "Mothers in Israel: An Intimate Sketch of Home Life," *The Relief Society Magazine* 3, no. 2 (Feb. 1916): 63.
47. Hermita, "Memory," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 15 (Jan. 1, 1882): 119.
48. Aunt Em, "A Happy New Year," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 14 (Jan. 1, 1891): 106.

49. "Pleasure Excursion to Black Rock," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 4 (July 15, 1880): 28. See also: Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, journal, 1855–1905, January 24, 1895, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; "A Wedding Anniversary," *Woman's Exponent* 28, no. 18 & 19 (Feb. 15 & March 1, 1900) 109.
50. "Half a Century," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1889): 45.
51. "A Friend of Long Ago," *Woman's Exponent* 25, no. 21 (May 1, 1897): 141.
52. [Emmeline B. Wells?], "Visit to Sanpete: Notes by the Way," *Woman's Exponent* 9 no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1880): 45. As another of countless examples, in describing the environment of the Tabernacle (the main gathering place for members of the church in Salt Lake City) upon the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the entrance of the first LDS pioneers into the valley, the author makes prominent mention of the natural decorations and the effect that these decorations created for the participant. "Home Affairs," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 4 (July 15, 1880): 28. See also: "Birthday Party," *Woman's Exponent* 31, no. 3 & 4 (July 1 & 15, 1902): 12.
53. As an example of one of these gatherings, women friends and colleagues arranged a surprise party for the fiftieth birthday party for Dr. Romania B. Pratt. "Half a Century," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 6 (Aug. 15, 1889): 45.
54. Aunt Em, "Desultory Memories," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 16 (Jan. 15, 1883): 121.
55. Lillie, "Thoughts on Meeting Old Friends," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 5 (Aug. 1, 1886): 33. See also: "Editorial Notes," *Woman's Exponent* 34, no. 6 (Nov. 1905): 36.
56. Harriet O. Lee, "A Remarkable Vision," p. 6, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
2. Catharine Cottam Romney, *Letters of Catharine Cottam Romney, Plural Wife,* Jennifer Moulton Hansen (ed.) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).
3. Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 23–29.
4. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor books, 1988).
5. Douglas writes of this phenomenon: "The chosen noms de plume of several of the most important of these authors suggest their anti-historical

bias in its least constructive guise: 'Fanny Forrester,' 'Fanny Fern,' 'Grace Greenwood,'—not to mention 'Minnie Myrtle,' 'Lily Larkspur,' and, somewhat later, 'Jenny June.' Such names, flirting coyly with suggestions of vegetative process, are decorative advertisements of luxury items. Even while they flatter the authors' femininity, they define it as superfluous; they are purely fictional. By such self-baptism, feminine authors become characters in their own sentimental effusions: hothouse products, they are self-announced refugees from history." Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture,* 186.

6. Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture,* 194–195.
7. Jan Shipps, *The Christian Century* 110, no. 29 (Oct. 20, 1993): 1012–1015.
8. Bruce Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
9. Ruth May Fox, diaries, March 7, 1896, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
10. *Relief Society Memories: A History of Relief Society in St. George Stake, 1867–1956,* compiled by Verna L. Dewsnap and Katharine M. Larson (St. George: St. George Relief Society, 1956), 60–61.
11. Lynn McGhie, *The Gardens at Temple Square: The Four Seasons* (Salt Lake City: The author, 1994), 38.
12. McGhie, *The Gardens at Temple Square,* 85.
13. It should also be noted that within the church there is a continuing interest in the nature-filled poetry of early Mormon women writers. The Daughters of Utah Pioneers and the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University have both recently published new compilations of Mormon women's poetry. In these compilations, many of the selections are by the early Mormon women writers noted in this project and many of the poems by them convey the still resonant nature and flower imagery. Susan Elizabeth Howe and Sheree Maxwell Bench (eds.), *Discoveries: Two Centuries of Poems by Mormon Women* (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, Association for Mormon Letters, 2004); Diane Wheeler (ed.), *Visions of Beauty: Pioneer Poetry and Art (*Salt Lake City: Wasatch International Marketing for the International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 2005).

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