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The rise of Mormon cultural history and the changing status of the archive

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THE RISE OF MORMON CULTURAL HISTORY
AND THE CHANGING STATUS OF THE ARCHIVE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Library and Information Science

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Library and Information Science

by

Joseph M. Spencer

August 2009

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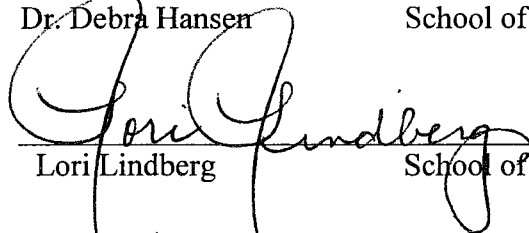
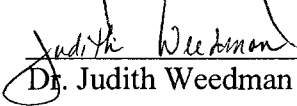
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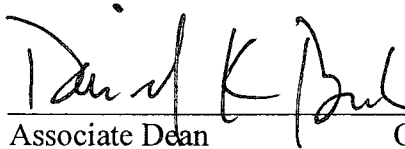
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by
Joseph M. Spencer

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ABSTRACT

THE RISE OF MORMON CULTURAL HISTORY AND THE CHANGING STATUS OF THE ARCHIVE

by Joseph M. Spencer

This thesis analyzes the historiographical methodologies of four historians of Mormonism associated with three distinct historiographical movements: Fawn McKay Brodie, Leonard J. Arrington, Jan Shipps, and Richard Bushman. The first major work of each of these historians of Mormonism is mined analytically and then subjected to a theoretical reflection in order to establish the historian's relationship to the archive. In the concluding chapter, the various archivologies unearthed are compared and analyzed through an engagement of four contemporary French philosophers who have written on the archive: Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière. A theory of the "immanent archive" is set forth. Conclusions are drawn, primarily at the theoretical level, about the complex relationship between archival policy and historiographical method.

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My gratitude is due first and foremost to my wife, Karen, whose love has sustained my efforts, and whose rigor has forced me again and again to redouble my efforts. My gratitude, along with an apology, goes also to my children, who have been very understanding when they want to play but “Daddy is writing.”

I owe a particular thanks to all those who have helped me in terms of my research and in the development of my argument. Here I owe a great debt to my thesis committee chair, Debbie Hansen, whose excitement about this project did more for my work than she will ever know. I would also like to thank, in this regard, the many scholars interested in the strange connection between Mormonism and Continental (and post-Continental) philosophy, variously associated with the LDS-Hermeneutics e-mail list, the Mormon Theology Seminar, and Mormon Scholars in the Humanities. Constant discussion with many of these scholars has been a principal resource for much of my thinking. In particular, I would like to thank Jim Faulconer, who arguably started me down this road when he introduced me to the work of Paul Ricoeur in 2004.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, whose exemplary steadiness has been a strength for me throughout this project; my wife’s parents, whose material support and encouragement have been infinitely vital to my work; and Phil and Lynn Jarvis, who allowed me to borrow their home for a week of seclusion when it came time to put all of my research into a readable piece of writing.

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INTRODUCTION

The program for the 2008 conference of the Mormon History Association included a session entitled “What Do We Do Now that ‘New Mormon History’ Is Old?”¹ Two facilitators (Keith Erikson and Rachel Cope) were there only to stimulate “discussion and commentary from the audience.”² The reason for holding the session in the first place was the publication of an exchange published in late 2007 in the *Journal of American History* between Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman, in which both parties essentially agreed that the forty- or fifty-year life of what had been called the new Mormon history had come to an end.

Shipps’s contribution to the discussion is at once a book review (analyzing Bushman’s 2005 *Joseph Smith. Rough Stone Rolling*), a eulogy (recounting the life of the new Mormon history), and a manifesto (announcing the absorption of Mormon history into “a new American history that forces readers to recognize that religion is as much a

¹ It should be noted that “Mormonism” embraces literally dozens of different denominations (most of them quite small), all tracing their roots back to Joseph Smith and his translation of the *Book of Mormon*. The largest and most discussed of these denominations is, of course, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, centered in Salt Lake City, Utah. Two other denominations are also relatively well known: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, relatively recently renamed the Community of Christ (a branch of Mormonism, centered in Independence, Missouri, that defined itself essentially as a Mormonism without polygamy in 1860), and The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (a split-off of the Utah church that determined not to follow the definitive abandonment of polygamy by the latter in 1904). In this thesis, I will be dealing only with Mormonism as defined by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints whose archives are located at Church Headquarters on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The two standard histories of Utah Mormonism are James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); and Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980). A more recent, if shorter, is Richard L. Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates two websites: <http://lds.org> and <http://mormon.org>. It should also be noted that “Mormons” tend to refer to themselves as “members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” “Latter-day Saints” (LDS), or simply “Saints.” I will employ all of these terms in this study.

² Mormon History Association, “Sacramento Conference,” Mormon History Association, http://www.mhahome.org/conferences/registration/assets/08_Pre_Conference_Program.pdf (accessed March 12, 2009).

part of our past as anything else”).³ As Shipps tells the story, beginning with his 1969 paper, “Faithful History,” Richard Bushman has been slowly and methodically working from within to bring the new Mormon history to its logical conclusion, something he finally accomplished with *Joseph Smith. Rough Stone Rolling*. For Shipps—and Bushman himself says in his contribution to the exchange that “No one is better qualified to comment on the state of Mormon history than Jan Shipps”⁴—Bushman’s 2005 biography of the Prophet Joseph Smith is “the crowning achievement of the new Mormon history” and, precisely so, its last word.⁵

But what is—or really, *was*—the new Mormon history, and what can be said to be taking its place? As Jan Shipps most pithily puts it, the new Mormon history was “an intellectual and historiographical movement that carried the story of the Latter-day Saints into the cultural mainstream just as Mormonism itself was moving in from the margins to find a place on the American religious landscape as a respectable belief system and an upstanding faith community.”⁶ In other words, the new Mormon history was very much a part of a broader shift within Mormonism generally, a shift Shipps elsewhere calls “the scattering of the gathering.”⁷ Shipps here observes that it has only been since World War II that Mormonism has ceased to be a phenomenon of the Intermountain West. Before the 1960s, Mormons can be said to have been mostly a regionalized “peculiar people”

³ Jan Shipps, “Richard Lyman Bushman, the Story of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, and the New Mormon History,” *Journal of American History* 94 (September 2007): 498-516.

⁴ Richard L. Bushman. “What’s New in Mormon History?” *Journal of American History* 94 (September 2007): 517.

⁵ Shipps, “Richard Lyman Bushman,” 498.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Jan Shipps, “The Scattering of the Gathering and the Gathering of the Scattered. The Mid-Twentieth Century Mormon Diaspora,” chap. 13 in *Sojourner in the Promised Land Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

whose “separateness” and “creedal innovations” were, as sociologist Thomas O’Dea has argued, mutually reinforcing.⁸ The new Mormon history is thus connected to a geographical dispersion of the Latter-day Saints that accelerated through the twentieth century. In part because the first Saints definitively to leave the so-called “Mormon Corridor” (of Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Arizona) left specifically to pursue higher education, the new Mormon history was accompanied not only by an attempt to make Mormon history palatable to those outside the faith with whom Latter-day Saints were coming more frequently into contact, but also by an attempt to make rational sense of Mormonism’s peculiarities for those inside the faith.

Thus, as three of the more important new Mormon historians themselves have argued, the new Mormon history was characterized first and foremost by “an element of self-discovery.”⁹ Even though the movement would eventually sweep interested or even sympathetic non-Mormon historians into its wake (Jan Shipps being a perfect example), “the largest group of ‘new Mormon historians’ were . . . ‘believing’ Mormons, positioned at various places on a spectrum of belief, who hoped to use new historical methods to interpret their religion,” to work towards “understanding themselves.”¹⁰ In other words, not only were those *writing* in the new Mormon history primarily Latter-day Saints of one stripe or another in the process of working out the meaning of their Mormon heritage, but their writings’ intended “*audience* was [also] mainly LDS readers, often college

⁸ Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 53-54.

⁹ Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

educated, who sought a faith that could be intellectually challenged and explained.”¹¹

The result was, at least at its inception, a historical literature “largely written by Mormons for Mormons,” and one that was thus inevitably “open to the charge of narcissism.”¹²

However narcissistic the enterprise might have been, it is clear that the *methods* employed by those engaged in the new Mormon history were hardly (uniquely) Mormon in any obvious way: they were, quite straightforwardly, the methods of social history, then coming into vogue. Thus, if the new Mormon history has come to an end, it would seem that what has been left behind—what has become *old*—is precisely what was once deemed *new* historical methods. What has been abandoned is not Mormon history as such—Shipps is quick to point out that a *still newer* Mormon history is dethroning the old new Mormon history—but a particular approach to doing history (Mormon or otherwise) among historians interested in the story of Mormonism. At the heart, therefore, of the question of the announced end of the new Mormon history is actually the question of the status of a particular historiographical method, one that has in some circles been derogatively referred to as the “cult of the archive.” Which means that at the heart of the question of the announced end of the new Mormon history is the question of the status of the archives *after* social history.

That the new Mormon history was a product of the rise of social history is quite easy to demonstrate. Historically speaking, all historians of Mormonism (and of Mormon historiography in particular) are quite agreed that the rise of the new Mormon history—and especially of the centrality of its “new historical methods”—is associated with the

¹¹ *Ibid*, emphasis added.

¹² *Ibid*

work of one leading figure: the economic historian Leonard Arrington. Not only did he effectively launch the movement with the publication of his vastly important 1958 study, *Great Basin Kingdom*, but he went on to be, first, the founding president of the Mormon History Association in the 1960s; then, the official Church Historian of the LDS Church in the 1970s; and, finally, the director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History (located at Brigham Young University) in the 1980s and 1990s. As he maneuvered his way through these various positions, Arrington regarded himself as more than merely the metaphorical father of the new Mormon history; he spoke and wrote of his work as that of an “entrepreneur” rather than that of a “scholar working alone.”¹³ He saw himself as an organizer and a mentor, dedicating himself to the task of mustering collective forces of social historians to study various issues in Mormon history rather than to the work of producing individual volumes—something he continued to do until his death in 1999.

Above all, Arrington’s work—as also the work of those associated with him and mentored by him—is characterized by its closeness to the archives and its social historical methodologies. *Great Basin Kingdom* was originally Arrington’s dissertation, researched and written as he prepared to finish his academic training at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he studied not history, but economics. The decade of research, writing, and rewriting that led to the publication of *Great Basin Kingdom* began in 1947 in the then-rather-unprofessional archives of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City. Having, through circumstances to be described and analyzed in a subsequent

¹³ Leonard J. Arrington, “Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1977): 207.

chapter, gained more or less unrestrained (and unprecedented) access to the archives, Arrington did what he had been trained to do as an economist and historian of economics: he quantified and statisticized the material in the archives, page by page, constructing his historical arguments from his numerical calculations and analyses.

Importantly, Arrington was not reticent in claiming that his work was superior to that of the few serious historians of Mormonism who had gone before him. Undoubtedly, the most important of these pre-Arrington historians was Fawn M. Brodie, whose *No Man Knows My History* remained the standard biography of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, until Bushman's 2005 study was published.¹⁴ But if Bernard DeVoto could claim that Brodie had, with *No Man Knows My History*, "raised writing about Mormonism to the dignity of history—for the first time,"¹⁵ Arrington was less enthusiastic. In his unpublished "Appraisal of Brodie Book," he attacked specifically the historiographical method of Brodie's biography: "the book is essentially a work of art rather than a history in its purest sense. . . . She has used historical materials as the wherewithal, as the reservoir from which to draw supporting evidence for the portrait she chooses to draw. Thus, she uses adjectives and tendentious phrases which an historian would not use."¹⁶

¹⁴ It is worth noting that Larry McMurry, in his *New York Review of Books* review of *Joseph Smith Rough Stone Rolling*, announced that he thought Fawn Brodie's biography remains the standard biography. See however, Terryl Givens's response as published in Richard L. Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith An Author's Diary* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books), 66-67.

¹⁵ Bernard DeVoto, "The Case of the Prophet, Joseph Smith: First Dependable History of Mormonism Written from the Inside," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 17, 1945, section 7.

¹⁶ Leonard J. Arrington, "Appraisal of Brodie Book," Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University.

Arrington's criticisms, of course, betray his commitment to the rise of social history and its shifting historical emphasis from psychological and biographical questions to sociological and economic ones. For Arrington, history *was* social history, as he would suggest in a later, published assessment of Brodie's work: "Brodie was a biographer rather than a historian."¹⁷ But while Arrington was critical of Brodie (and others who were doing Mormon history in the 1940s), he nonetheless recognized that she had, at the very least, established the possibility of doing serious historical work on Mormonism. Though she failed to do Arrington's kind of history, she paved the way for his work.¹⁸

Arrington's association with the archives and endorsement of social historical methods were hardly isolated to his dissertation research experience. When Arrington became the official LDS Church Historian in 1972 and so was given the authority to establish or alter archival policies, he threw open the doors of an archive that had been relatively off-limits to both historians and the public. Having been given a staff of professional historians and the means to begin issuing fellowships to graduate students, he became a kind of mentor for an entire generation of historians of Mormonism.¹⁹ For a

¹⁷ Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 114.

¹⁸ Arrington was more dismissive in a letter written to George D. Smith in 1975: "It is important to know, I suppose, that she wrote the book when she was in her late twenties and in a state of rebellion against her father and against the Church." Leonard J. Arrington to George D. Smith, 10 March 1975, Leonard J. Arrington Papers. He was also more directly dismissive in his autobiography written just before his death, where he described *No Man Knows My History* as "a book repudiated by both LDS and RLDS officials and regarded as seriously flawed by most knowledgeable historians." Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 186.

¹⁹ This had apparently begun even before Arrington had been given the position of Church Historian, perhaps as early as 1968: "In the years that followed [1967], unsolicited invitations were sent from the historian's office to several Latter-day Saint scholars (and a few others) to conduct research in the

full decade, Arrington took advantage of the institutional clout his position gave him in order to establish the new Mormon history as *the* Mormon history.

From the mid-to-late 1960s to the late 1970s, the historiographical methodologies of social history seemed to be perfect for doing Mormon history: not only did it enjoy credibility among the historical establishment, it also drew approval and admiration from the Church hierarchy. The social historical emphasis on institutional, economic, and especially regional history was quite palatable to ecclesiastical authorities and Latter-day Saints in general, most of whom took pride in the fact that they were descendants of Mormon pioneers and other settlers of the West. That decade of approval, however, came rather suddenly and (for those involved) lamentably to an end. The early 1980s saw a drastic reversal of the Church's openness to the findings of new Mormon historians. Over the course of only a few years, archival accessibility policies were revised, making many records suddenly unavailable and even barring certain kinds of researchers from the archives entirely.

The first major blow to the hegemony the new Mormon history had commanded came in 1980. Leonard Arrington, the hierarchy suddenly announced, was to be released from his position as official Church Historian, and his historical department would move to the Church-owned but far less ecclesiastically significant campus of Brigham Young University (where Arrington would head up the newly organized Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History).²⁰ This was followed, in 1981, by a discourse delivered by

archives." Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 76. See also Gary Topping, *Leonard J Arrington: A Historian's Life* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008), 99.

²⁰ Arrington would eventually speak of this in a somewhat conciliatory fashion: "This major restructuring, desired by the general authorities of the church and BYU, was orchestrated by [Homer]

Elder Boyd K. Packer, one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was quickly interpreted as a wholesale institutional condemnation of the new Mormon history.²¹ By 1982, Arrington's work at the Church Archives was over, and his move to BYU was complete.²² What ultimately was behind these drastic changes—what it was that made Arrington's historiographical method distasteful to the Church hierarchy—will be discussed and analyzed in a later chapter.

One of the inevitable consequences of these changes was an outcry from those in the Mormon intellectual community who had been involved in one way or another with the new Mormon history. Historians who had come to feel at home in the institutional archives of the LDS Church suddenly found themselves effectively disinherited. Some even complained that the policy changes were going to cause serious occupational consequences for them, since they had spent ten years building a career out of research in what had suddenly become inaccessible archives. More publicly, independent Mormon journals began to publish articles and news updates about the changes in the bureaucratic

Durham and [Gordon B.] Hinckley to place the History Division under a university rubric. I was later informed that a prime consideration was timing. [Spencer W.] Kimball [the president of the Church at the time and a supporter of the new Mormon historians at work at Church Headquarters] was in failing health and not expected to live long, and these arrangers wanted to keep our work alive by shifting us to BYU before [Ezra Taft] Benson assumed control as [Church] president and eliminated our division and discontinued our functions. Durham and Hinckley were, as they believed, doing a favor to us, to BYU, and to the church." Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 215. Perhaps confirming this interpretation, it was under Gordon B. Hinckley as the president of the Church from 1995 to 2008 that the BYU institution formed in 1980 was dismantled and the department was moved back to the headquarters of the Church.

²¹ Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 259-78.

²² The emotional response with which new Mormon historians reacted to these developments can be felt in Davis Bitton's "personal memoir," published only a year after the move to BYU. Davis Bitton, "Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 9-33.

organization and imposed policies surrounding use of the archives.²³ The new Mormon history, as a movement, was in crisis.

The crisis was exacerbated by the emergence of several Mormon intellectuals who were highly critical of the new Mormon history. Most prominent among them were Louis Midgley and David Bohn, both political science (rather than history) professors at BYU.²⁴ New Mormon historians almost immediately labeled these critics reactionaries because of the similarity between the thrust of their conclusions and the thrust of the new, remarkably restrictive archival policies imposed by the institutional hierarchy of the Mormon Church. However, the most vocal of these critics of the new Mormon history made their criticisms from the non-ecclesiastical ground of political philosophy and theory—specifically of the philosophy and theory that had commanded Western European discussions during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, taking advantage of the change in attitude toward the work of Mormon historians among Mormon leaders, these critics argued that new Mormon historians were uncritical positivists, victims of what Peter Novick would only a few years later call “that noble dream,” the positivistic fantasy of writing scientific history.²⁵

²³ A few examples are: Lin Ostler Strack, “Access to Church Archives: Penetrating the Silence,” *Sunstone Review* 3 (October 1983): 4-7; Richard D. Ouellette, “Reading Sealed Books at the Archives,” *Sunstone* 11 (September 1987): 40, 43; and “Church Archives Adopts New Access Policies,” *Sunstone* 10 (July 1986): 43-44.

²⁴ Exemplary articles by these and other similar critics can be found in George D. Smith, *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

²⁵ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). There is still some—rather tired—debate about whether these critics were essentially postmodernists taking advantage of the ecclesiastical change in policy, or conservative Latter-day Saints taking advantage of the rise of postmodern criticism. See, for example, John-Charles Duffy, “Can Deconstruction Save the Day? ‘Faithful Scholarship’ and the Uses of Postmodernism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-33; and Alan Goff,

Thus, after a full decade of ecclesiastical and popular approbation, the new Mormon historians suddenly found themselves under both institutional and theoretical attack. Thus it was that Martin Marty, as the 1983 keynote speaker for the annual conference of the Mormon History Association, formally diagnosed the “crisis in Mormon historiography.”²⁶ According to Marty, the difficulty was a direct consequence of the new Mormon history’s dismissal of the *double* commitment—what Paul Ricoeur, whom Marty discusses at length, would call the “double vow”—inherent in any academic inquiry into a faith-based phenomenon such as the history of a religion. The historian of religion who would please the leaders of a religious institution must, according to Marty, be committed both to rigor *and* to faith.²⁷ But while Marty’s paper unquestionably addresses what was ultimately at the bottom of the crisis, he was not aware of at least one major historical factor that had been a major determinant in the sudden change in the ecclesiastical response to the new Mormon history: the sudden appearance of unrecognized forgeries in the Mormon documentary record.

Beginning as early as 1980, a young student at Utah State University named Mark Hofmann had forged a number of historical documents that he then pretended to discover. Though the first several of these documents were little more than curiosities or treasures (their content essentially calling for no change in the way the history of Mormonism would need to be told), Hofmann’s “finds” soon started to be increasingly damaging to

“Thou Shalt Not Commit Positivism Nor Anything Like Unto It: Apology, Theory, and the End of the New Mormon History,” unpublished paper, copy in author’s possession.

²⁶ Martin E. Marty, “Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography,” *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 3-19.

²⁷ “Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.” Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

the established story of Mormonism's beginnings. The two most famous of these were (1) a forged record of a ritual blessing given by Joseph Smith to his son, Joseph Smith III, announcing that the boy would be the founding prophet's immediate successor;²⁸ and (2) a forged letter describing Joseph Smith not as having received the *Book of Mormon* from an angel (this angelic encounter being essentially *the* founding event of Mormonism), but from a white salamander (a figure associated with early American folk magic). Both of these forged documents were, relatively quietly, acquired by the Church and placed in the archives, whose accessibility therefore needed to be limited while ecclesiastical authorities attempted to make sense of the forgeries.²⁹

Though the documents Hofmann brought to light would eventually be recognized as forgeries, this would not occur until after 1986. In fact, Hofmann's fraud would not be discovered until he had, because his secret was beginning to be jeopardized by a number of circumstances, murdered several people and accidentally wounded himself in the process.³⁰ That both historians and members of the Church hierarchy did not recognize the forged nature of the suddenly emergent historical record resulted in a stretch of a few years during which it was becoming increasingly difficult for even traditionally faithful historians to tell the story of Mormonism in a way that could sustain faith.³¹

²⁸ Joseph Smith III was in fact the immediate successor to Joseph Smith not in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but in its Missouri rival, The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The forged blessing thus seemed to undermine, in the name of the Church's founding prophet, the Utah Church's claim to legitimate prophetic succession.

²⁹ See Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "The Damage Done: An Archivist's View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 52-60.

³⁰ There are several popular treatments of Hofmann's story, but the standard academic treatment is Richard E. Turley, *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

³¹ Importantly, Arrington was not involved in the Hofmann affair in any direct way: he had already begun his transfer to BYU when the forged documents began to surface. However, it should be noted that

A number of complex convergences in the field of Mormon historiography thus characterized the first years of the 1980s: (1) unrecognized forgeries of historical documents calling the Mormon story radically into question began to appear; (2) drastic changes in the archival policy of the institutional Church began to bar new Mormon historical inquiry; (3) Arrington's ecclesiastically approved team of historians and researchers were moved from Church Headquarters to Brigham Young University; (4) a number of Mormon intellectuals began to develop a sophisticated historiographical critique of the methodologies employed by new Mormon historians; and (5) many involved in the new Mormon history began to express a spirit of disaffection.³²

While some—perhaps most—new Mormon historians found reason to see this convergence of circumstances as the passing of the promise of an academically viable Mormon history, others saw in it an important moment of historiographical opportunity. Two historians in particular precipitated out of the swirling solution that was the crisis of Mormon historiography to become new leaders in the Mormon history field—and neither of them was, strictly speaking, doing new Mormon history. And importantly, only one of the two emergent historians was Mormon, making quite clear that the “element of self-discovery” that had constantly threatened the new Mormon history with “the charge of

new Mormon historians, many of whom had worked in Arrington's historical department, were those duped by—and calling for a revision of the Church's history in light of—the forgeries. There is little question that the appearance of Hofmann's forgeries widened the rift between Arrington and the Church hierarchy.

³² One might add to this the growing sense of conflict over the question of feminism in Mormonism at the time. ERA activist Sonia Johnson had been excommunicated in 1979 for her public criticisms of the church's involvement in the anti-ERA campaign—an event that many Mormon feminists took as indicative of the church's fundamentalism.

narcissism” had begun to disappear. These two historians were Richard Bushman and Jan Shipps.

Though both Shipps and Bushman had been heavily involved in Mormon history since at least the 1960s, it was only in 1984-1985 that they became central figures in the discipline. In those two years there appeared first Richard Bushman’s *Joseph Smith and the Beginning of Mormonism* and then Jan Shipps’s *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Articles by Marvin Hill and Klaus Hansen on Bushman and Shipps respectively appeared side by side in the 1984 issue of the *Journal of Mormon History*, announcing the two new historians’ joint arrival in the limelight and clearly recognizing the distinctions that set off their new approach to Mormon history.³³ Klaus Hansen was especially emphatic about the fact that—even as “Bushman avers he is a believing Mormon while Shipps goes to some pains to make sure we know she isn’t”—both “write the same kind of history.”³⁴ Neither Hill nor Hansen offered a name by which the new historiographical approach could be called, but at least Hansen was quite clear about the prospects for the new method: “this approach accomplishes a quantum leap in our understanding of Mormon history.”³⁵

If Klaus Hansen played the part of historiographical prognosticator in 1984, his predictions were seconded four years later by the father of the new Mormon history himself. In *Mormons and Their Historians*, written with Davis Bitton, Leonard Arrington presented Bushman and Shipps (along with Charles S. Peterson) as carrying

³³ Marvin S. Hill, “Richard L. Bushman—Scholar and Apologist,” *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 125-33; and Klaus J. Hansen, “Jan Shipps and the Mormon Tradition,” *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 135-45.

³⁴ Hansen, “Jan Shipps and the Mormon Tradition,” 136-137.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

Mormon history forward beyond the collapses and complexities of the early 1980s.³⁶ But, like Hill and Hansen, Arrington and Bitton only discussed and commended the work of Shipps and Bushman in broad terms, never actually naming the nascent historiographical method they had begun to employ. The same must be said of the 2001 volume *Mormon History* by new Mormon historians Ronald Walker, David Whittaker, and James Allen. Though these three authors discuss both Bushman and Shipps as prominent figures in Mormon history at the close of the twentieth century, they fail to distinguish how their writing differed from that of their predecessors.³⁷

But it would seem that even Shipps and Bushman were slow to see how much their methods differed from those of the new Mormon history. It was not, after all, until Jan Shipps's 2007 piece in the *Journal of American History* that she announced the definitive end of the new Mormon history, tying that end to the 2005 publication of Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. What had apparently been going was slow in coming, but it seems now to be distinctly clear. Shipps's 2007 piece not only explicitly attempts to put the last nail in the coffin of the new Mormon history, but argues that the coffin was already in construction by 1984 and 1985. Moreover, not only did Bushman concede Shipps's point in his simultaneously published response, but he has begun to speak in at least his 2008-2009 lectures at Claremont Graduate University of "new wave Mormon studies."³⁸ Whatever name will be settled on for the replacement

³⁶ Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 147-164.

³⁷ Walker, Whittaker, and Allen, *Mormon History*, 78-80, 85.

³⁸ Richard Livingston, e-mail message to author, March 17, 2009.

Mormon historiography, it is clear that it has been definitively distinguished from the new Mormon history.

For my own purposes, I will give to this emergent Mormon historiography the name, “Mormon cultural history.” This name seems to be appropriate for the simple reason that, inasmuch as the new Mormon history is to be regarded as the Mormon historiographical parallel to the broader mid-twentieth-century historiographical project of social history, the newly emergent historical work of Bushman, Shipps, and a whole coterie of scholars working after their fashion, should be seen to employ the historiographical methods of what is now the established discipline of cultural history. Though Bushman himself apparently spoke of “new wave Mormon studies,” Alfred Knopf saw fit to print on the dust jacket of Bushman’s *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* the sub-subtitle, “A cultural biography of Mormonism’s founder.”³⁹ Similarly, Sterling McMurrin described Jan Shipps in a blurb printed on the back of the dust jacket of her 1985 *Mormonism* as “a leading authority on Mormonism” and “a cultural historian of a very high order.”

Now, the story of modern Mormon historiography as I have here told it—with reductionistic brevity and from the singular perspective of Shipps’s 2007 announcement of the end of the new Mormon history—is meant here only to *introduce* the task I take up in the following pages. And, importantly, the task to which this thesis is dedicated is *not* primarily guided by some privileged interest in Mormon studies (though I *do* have an

³⁹ Bushman was himself referring to *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* as a “cultural biography” a full decade before it was published. See Richard L. Bushman, “Making Space for the Mormons,” in *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 175.

abiding interest in Mormon studies). Rather, the following study aims to be, in the end, an exclusively archival reflection—an exercise in what might be called the “philosophy of the archive.” Extended discussion of the rise of Mormon cultural history—which not only occupies the majority of this introduction, but also occupies the entirety of the first three of the four chapters of this thesis—is motivated by the remarkable *visibility* of the changing status of the archive in the field of Mormon studies as the shift from the new Mormon history to Mormon cultural history comes to completion.

Underlining the visibility of this change in the status of the archive, Davis Bitton and Leonard Arrington suggested in 1988 that the most important continuing “obstacle confronting Bushman [and] Shipps” would be the difficulty of being granted “access to [archival] materials.”⁴⁰ Having only begun to recognize the distinction between the new Mormon history and what Shipps and Bushman were doing, and having not at all yet begun to reflect on how the rising Mormon cultural history differed in its relationship to the archive, Bitton and Arrington could not have been more wrong in their prediction. During precisely the two decades in which Bushman and Shipps’s Mormon cultural history has been on the rise, there has been an irreversible turning inside-out of the archival holdings of the LDS Church. Since the year 2000, the Church has arranged for the publication of literally *millions* of key archival documents, whether on DVD,⁴¹

⁴⁰ Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 163.

⁴¹ *Sunstone Magazine*, “Church Archives Release Documents on DVD,” *Sunstone Magazine*, <http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/126-72-79.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2009).

through online sources,⁴² or in print.⁴³ Arguably—such, at any rate, is the argument of this thesis—this massive change in the availability (and irreversible publication!) of archival records is a direct consequence of the change in Mormon historiography: the rise to prominence of cultural historical methodologies has assured the ecclesiastical hierarchy that fair, productive history will be written if archival holdings are made as accessible as possible. Indeed, it would almost seem that the hierarchy of the Mormon Church has been waiting for precisely such a historical methodology to come along.

Exploiting this visibility by taking the story of modern Mormon historiography as a case study, this thesis wagers an archivological reflection on the relationship between historiographical methodologies and the cultural, social, and political status of the archive. My argument will be that the rise of (Mormon) cultural history—by distracting the historian’s attention from the archive and refocusing it on the complex interplay of cultures or communities—effects what might be called a “banalization” of the archive, a term the philosophical meaning of which will become clear only in chapter 4 of this study.

Here, I would like to add one further word about my own methodology. In what follows, I isolate three moments from the brief story of modern Mormon historiography as I have laid it out above. Each of these three moments will be considered in some detail in the first three chapters of this thesis. Chapter 1 offers an analysis of the

⁴² The website for the online collection is <http://www.lib.byu.edu/online.html>. Included are archival materials, Church periodicals, academic theses and dissertations, photo archives, and other historical resources.

⁴³ 2008 saw the publication of the first of thirty-two volumes of the Joseph Smith Papers Project, a project headed by the Historical Department of the church itself and endorsed by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. See <http://josephsmithpapers.org/Default.htm>.

historiographical work of Fawn Brodie (particularly, of her book *No Man Knows My History*). Chapter 2 then takes up an analysis of the historiographical work of Leonard Arrington (particularly, of his book *Great Basin Kingdom*). Chapter 3, finally, offers an analysis of the historiographical work of Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman (particularly, of their respective books *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* and *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*). These analyses are themselves undertaken through a method that might be called “bibliohermeneutics,” a method characterized by (1) the interest in historiographical apparatuses manifested in bibliometrics and (2) the sustained phenomenological approach of contemporary hermeneutics. The preliminary findings of these combined analyses are explored in a much more philosophical, archivological vein in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 1

THE LOST GENERATION: FAWN MCKAY BRODIE

Fawn McKay Brodie was, in many respects, a product of her time. Born in rural Utah in 1915, she was raised in a religious culture that was characterized by a subtle zeal and a still subtler secularity. The strange mix that was Mormonism in the two or three decades preceding World War II was perfectly embodied in Brodie's parents. Her father, whose brother would become the president of the Church in 1951, was a bastion of faith and espoused the dogmas of traditional Mormonism, serving constantly in hierarchically important positions. Her mother was what Brodie would eventually call "a kind of quiet heretic";¹ she was, like many Utahans in the first years of the twentieth century, a cultural or social Mormon, holding the opinion that "it didn't really matter whether you . . . were active in the Church or not," the Church being little more than "a wonderful social order."² Brodie was, at least up through the end of her undergraduate work at the University of Utah, something of an amalgamation of the two positions represented by her parents.

Brodie was hardly alone. During the 1920s and 1930s, it was quite common for intellectually inclined Latter-day Saints to be quite proud of their Mormon heritage while

¹ Shirley E. Stephenson, "Fawn McKay Brodie: An Oral History Interview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 102.

² Quoted from interviews in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 21. Importantly, Brodie's maternal grandfather was Dean Brimhall, the president of the then still young Brigham Young University, a position he held during the heated debates over modernism of the 1910s. Though he eventually fell on the more orthodox side of the debate, he seems himself to have been—like many of the Brimhall family—more of a cultural Mormon than a traditionally faithful one. On the modernism debates at BYU, see Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 131-171.

rejecting, often outright, the dogma and traditions of the religion.³ This was in part a consequence of the process of accommodation through which the Church had been undergoing since 1890, the year the Church officially announced the cessation of the practice of plural marriage. With the collapse of that major “wall of partition” between Latter-day Saints and the United States, Mormonism found itself facing the challenges—bureaucratic, financial, social, geographical, and theological—of modernization.⁴ By the 1930s, many of the most celebrated educators employed by the Church and approved by the hierarchy were precisely of Brodie’s stripe. Ranging from O. C. Tanner (who wrote Sunday School manuals for the Church, yet confessedly hoped the Church would “get rid of [the *Book of Mormon*]” because it was “driving the best minds out of the church!”)⁵ to Sterling McMurrin (who taught high-school religion courses for the Church for years even as he believed neither in the historicity of the *Book of Mormon* nor in the existence of God),⁶ cultural Mormons struggled to make of the Church an indigenous culture that could embrace its history and peculiarities without saddling itself with the dogmatic beliefs of its founders.

When Brodie was awarded a bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Utah and left the Intermountain West to pursue graduate work at the University of Chicago in 1935, she abandoned even cultural Mormonism. As she would claim later,

³ Two autobiographical works by two representative figures of this type of Mormonism are illustrative. Obert C. Tanner, *One Man’s Journey In Search of Freedom* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995); and Sterling M. McMurrin and L. Jackson Newell, *Matters of Conscience Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin on Philosophy, Education, and Religion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996).

⁴ The standard work on the conflict between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and modernism is Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁵ Boyd Jay Petersen, *Hugh Nibley A Consecrated Life* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2002), 160.

⁶ Noel Reynolds, “The Coming Forth of the *Book of Mormon* in the Twentieth Century,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999). 24.

“the confining aspects of the Mormon religion dropped off within a few weeks,” something that felt like “taking off a hot coat in the summertime.”⁷ Marrying out of the faith during her graduate work—her husband was, unfortunately to the dismay of some family members, a secular Jew—she soon found herself completely alienated from her childhood faith. In part to complete her separation from Mormonism and in part to provide answers to her curious husband, Brodie began doing research in 1938 to uncover “the roots and sources of what Joseph Smith’s ideas were.”⁸ Thus it was that a graduate student in English at the University of Chicago—who had never received any formal training in historiography—found herself beginning to research and write what would become the standard work on the founder of Mormonism.

Research and Writing

The project that would become *No Man Knows My History* began not as a lengthy biographical study, but as an attempt “to write a short article on the sources of the *Book of Mormon*.”⁹ As Brodie explained in a letter to Nephi Jensen, “When a study of the anthropology of the American Indians convinced me that they were of Mongoloid rather than Hebraic origin, I wanted to satisfy myself as to just how the *Book of Mormon* came to be written. That stimulated my research into early Mormon history.”¹⁰ But though Brodie inaugurated her research in an attempt only to study the origins of the *Book of Mormon*, she nonetheless quickly found herself “gripped” by what she would describe as

⁷ Quoted in Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie*, 58.

⁸ Stephenson, “Fawn McKay Brodie,” 104.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Fawn M. Brodie to Nephi Jensen, no date, Fawn McKay Brodie Papers, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah (copy in Leonard J. Arrington Papers).

“a piece of detective work” that she found “absolutely compelling.”¹¹ After she finished her graduate work, she took a job as a librarian at the University of Chicago’s Harper Library, where she found she had ample resources to begin serious research on the region in which Mormonism was born: the New York frontier in the 1820s and 1830s.

Brodie’s geographical position when she began her research is of the utmost importance for making sense of the shape her biography of Joseph Smith eventually took. Because it was arguably *she* who would raise “writing about Mormonism to the dignity of history—for the first time,”¹² there was relatively little available to her in the way of secondary sources. And, because she was “back East” rather than in the Intermountain West, only two very particular kinds of primary resources were available to her. First, she had ample access to nineteenth-century publications that can be grouped under the broad rubric of “anti-Mormon.” These sources were generally inflammatory pieces written to “expose” or “unveil” Mormonism to the world; but because they generally drew on the testimonies of lapsed or disaffected Latter-day Saints—many of whom were not only acquaintances, but veritable confidants of Joseph Smith—these resources undoubtedly provide important, if obviously biased, firsthand glimpses of Mormon origins. The second type of primary source abundantly available to Fawn Brodie in the Harper Library and elsewhere on the East Coast was general material about the history of the region in which Mormonism was born, though such material would seldom have had

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Bernard DeVoto, “The Case of the Prophet, Joseph Smith: First Dependable History of Mormonism Written from the Inside,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 17, 1945, section 7.

anything *direct* to say about Mormon origins. Brodie's extensive research in these sources was, without question, a new thing in the writing of Mormon history.

This is not, of course, to suggest that Brodie did not avail herself of secondary sources. However, it must be recognized that there was, before Brodie published *No Man Knows My History* in 1945, basically no academic work in print on Joseph Smith. Brodie herself described the literature on Joseph Smith as being divided into hagiography (when written by Latter-day Saints) and anti-Mormon polemic (when written by non-Mormons).¹³ Hence, though academic treatments of Mormonism had been appearing at least since 1903,¹⁴ almost none of the reputable theses, dissertations, periodical articles, and even books dealt with the founding Mormon prophet. Rather, academic interest was quite consistently concerned with anthropological or regional historical issues—topics that were safe because they did not raise thorny religious questions.¹⁵

Moves in 1940 to Princeton, New Jersey, in 1941 to Hanover, New Hampshire, and in 1943 to Washington, D.C., as well as the birth of a first child in 1942, seriously slowed Brodie's research, though she found herself perusing other library collections and finding more (if similar) resources useful for reconstructing the milieu into which Mormonism had been born. But the project did not take a decidedly productive turn until Brodie determined in 1943 to approach a publisher with a manuscript of 300 pages that covered the early years of Joseph Smith's religious experiences. Having contacted

¹³ Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), vii. Unless otherwise noted, references to *No Man Knows My History* are to the 1945 first edition.

¹⁴ Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen. *Mormon History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 38.

¹⁵ Exemplary and perhaps most influential and widely read among these is Lowry Nelson's *The Mormon Village: A Pattern of Technique of Land Settlement*, which began as a number of articles published in the 1930s. Walker, Whittaker, and Allen, *Mormon History*, 41.

Princeton University Press first, but being advised by the editor to seek out a nonacademic press, both “because of its controversial approach” and its “potential for commercial success,”¹⁶ Fawn Brodie applied for an Alfred A. Knopf Literary Fellowship to complete the project.

Her letter of application heavily emphasized the newness of her take on Mormon origins. She wrote of “a myriad of scattered documents” she was pursuing, arguing that “where so much controversy is rampant, one needs documentation—not imaginary conversations.”¹⁷ Receiving news in May of 1943 that she had been awarded the fellowship, which was accompanied by a stipend for research, she began at last to do her research and writing in earnest, now frequenting the definitive holdings at the Library of Congress in her new home town of Washington, D.C. Utilizing the stipend she had been awarded, she now traveled to New York to do research in the State Library as well as in what she would later describe as “one of the three great collections on Mormon history,” the holdings of the New York Public Library.¹⁸

But though these libraries undeniably provided her with the most definitive “anti-Mormon” and regional historical resources available, Brodie had not as yet consulted any actual archival materials directly associated with the rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To rectify this situation, she made a trip back to her native Utah in the

¹⁶ Newell G. Bringhurst, “A Biography of the Biography: The Research and Writings of *No Man Knows My History*,” in *Reconsidering “No Man Knows My History” Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1996), 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸ Fawn M. Brodie, “The Libraries in My Life,” *Utah Libraries Journal of the Utah Library Association* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 14 See also Stephenson, “Fawn McKay Brodie,” 103.

summer of 1943. What happened during her visit to the Church Archives would come to define her project in important ways.

In charge of the Church Archives in 1943 was the commanding Joseph Fielding Smith, an apostle in the Church's hierarchy and the son of the former president of the Church, Joseph F. Smith.¹⁹ The younger Smith had been the official Church Historian for twenty-two years by the time Brodie came to the archives. He would remain the official Church Historian for another twenty-seven years after Brodie's visit, before becoming the president of the Church for a brief time.²⁰ Because Smith believed, as Leonard Arrington would later explain, that "'objectivity' . . . meant seeing that the history of the Church was presented in a positive light, rejecting the extreme and irresponsible charges of the Church's enemies," his approach to the archives was characterized by a "hesitancy to make available all of the documents in his care."²¹ As Brodie herself explained with an obvious air of frustration (and, as shall be seen, of self-justification), she "learned very quickly that almost everyone is barred from its gates."²²

Because of her family connections—Brodie was introduced as Brother Thomas McKay's daughter²³—she was allowed access to a library whose "welcome" sign at the time simply read "Library—No Admittance."²⁴ Her recollections betray a genuine

¹⁹ Joseph F. Smith was the nephew of the founding prophet Joseph Smith, making Joseph Fielding Smith the grand-nephew of the "first Mormon."

²⁰ Marlin K. Jensen, "Church History: Past, Present, Future," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 28. Incidentally, Joseph Fielding Smith would succeed Fawn Brodie's uncle, David O. McKay, in the presidency.

²¹ Leonard J. Arrington, "Joseph Fielding Smith: Faithful Historian," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 23.

²² Quoted in Bringhurst, "A Biography of the Biography," 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, 16. Brodie's father had recently been invited into the highest echelons of the Mormon hierarchy, serving as an Assistant to the Twelve (Apostles)

²⁴ The sign is featured in Jensen, "Church History," 42.

nervousness on her part, explaining that she began her visit by being “scrupulously careful” about what kinds of sources she asked to see while feeling “as guilty as hell” about having been introduced as the daughter of a faithful member of the Church’s hierarchy.²⁵ After having glanced through materials (primarily early Church periodicals) that she might easily have found in other Utah repositories, Brodie finally asked a librarian for access to a primary source, one of Joseph Smith’s diaries. As a result, she was referred to Joseph Fielding Smith himself, the only person who could grant access to such materials.

The encounter between Brodie and Smith—the only firsthand account of which comes from Brodie—seems at once to have been somewhat contentious and yet quite amiable. Though Brodie described Smith as becoming “most unfriendly” when she described her project and explained that she was pursuing her work without the blessing of her father, she also described him as having given her remarkably revealing historical information that would not likely have been communicated in a tense situation.²⁶ Brodie reported him as having explained, “There are things in this library we don’t let anyone see,” apparently because such materials “would be misinterpreted by the bulk of the church members.”²⁷

²⁵ Bringhurst, “A Biography of the Biography.” Brodie’s nervousness betrays her recognition that, while there was at that time a kind of understanding and acceptance of cultural Mormonism, there was little understanding and acceptance of those who had gone beyond mere secularism into sheer apostasy. Though her uncle David O McKay, who would eventually become president of the Church, would fight to keep a heretic like Sterling McMurrin in the Church, it remains unclear whether he played a major role in inaugurating the process of Brodie’s excommunication after her biography was published. Gregory A. Prince and Robert Wright, *David O McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 55-58; Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie*, 112-113.

²⁶ Bringhurst, “A Biography of the Biography,” 16. Brodie cites this information in a footnote in *No Man Knows My History*, 184.

²⁷ Bringhurst, “A Biography of the Biography,” 16.

Whatever the tone of the meeting, Brodie left the archives immediately to return to her parents' home, where she was staying during her visit. Shortly thereafter, she was paid a visit by her uncle, David O. McKay, the soon-to-be president of the Church.²⁸ She described this second encounter as much more painful because it was much more personal. In what Brodie would later describe as a “very long, and very difficult interview,”²⁹ McKay forbade her from returning to the library because, as she reported to Dale Morgan shortly after the experience, “[her] presence was an embarrassment to him” and because “he wasn’t going to permit anyone to use the library who would distort the truth.”³⁰ True to his pacifying character, however, McKay sent her a “formal little note” of reconciliation later in the afternoon, giving her full access to the archival collection.³¹ As she told the story in a 1972 letter to Leonard Arrington:

When he left, he denied me permission to use the library. However, the following day I received a note rescinding this, and officially granting me use of the library. At this point, however, I could not in good conscience further exacerbate a family crisis, and wrote in reply to my uncle that I would not return to the library. I never did go back.³²

Apparently, then, because of the awkwardness of the several confrontations—if what she told Arrington was not actually a cover for her indignation at the whole difficulty, and

²⁸ McKay was already a very high leader in the Church and would become the president of the Church in 1950.

²⁹ Stephenson, “Fawn McKay Brodie,” 103.

³⁰ Bringham, “A Biography of the Biography,” 17 These words come from a letter Brodie wrote in September 1943 to Dale Morgan.

³¹ *Ibid.* See also Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 113. On McKay’s character in general, see Prince and Wright, *David O McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*.

³² Fawn M. Brodie to Leonard J. Arrington, 7 December, 1972, Fawn McKay Brodie Papers (copy in Leonard J. Arrington Papers)

despite the fact that she herself would confess only months later that a definitive study could only be written by someone with full access to the archives—Brodie rejected her opportunity to take advantage of the access that she had been, somewhat grudgingly, given to the definitive holdings of the Church Archives.

Though she visited two other archival collections in Utah before again returning to the East, neither of these held documentary materials directly revealing the history of the founding prophet of Mormonism. However, on the way home, Brodie traveled to the archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a split-off branch of Mormonism that was centered in Independence, Missouri. Because Joseph Smith's wife and sons had united themselves to Missouri Mormonism rather than Utah Mormonism, Brodie was able for the first time there to consult a confessedly limited set of primary sources directly revealing the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Apparently "treated with every courtesy," she was able to peruse materials and see artifacts that even many LDS historians had never handled.³³ But, helpful as these limited sources certainly were, they were nothing like the definitive resources then inaccessibly stored in Salt Lake City.

If this only partly successful journey to Salt Lake City marked the end of Brodie's most consistent archival research, it was not the end of her training in the writing of Mormon history. Very important to her further research, and especially to the shape her writing would eventually take, was her friendship with Dale Morgan, a similarly lapsed Mormon who had already become an important bibliographer and historian of the

³³ Bringhurst, "A Biography of the Biography," 17.

American West. His letters to Brodie reveal the mentoring role he played for her. In his response to her letter about her archival experiences in Utah, for example, he describes his being “highly amused by the tale” but “not in the least surprised” by the results.³⁴ He goes on in the same letter to describe his own efforts to retrieve documents from the Church Archives that were mostly inaccessible, at times with success, at times without.³⁵ In subsequent letters, besides reporting more of the same, he would begin to offer criticisms of her various drafts of the biography, being her most honest early critic.³⁶ Morgan unquestionably had the strongest hand in helping Brodie to construct the vision her biography communicated in the end.

Aside from the few retrievable letters Brodie wrote about her research and writing in the 1940s—and a few later interviews and written recollections—little source material is available to show her relationship to the archives and collections she utilized. She seems not to have kept a diary during the years she was researching Joseph Smith, and, quite unfortunately, none of her research notes from the 1940s seem to have survived long enough to have been included with her papers in the Marriott Library at the University of Utah. Her work, moreover, was done in relative isolation, rather than through collaborative research efforts. As Newell Bringhurst has nicely depicted it,

³⁴ John Phillip Walker, *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 46.

³⁵ Charles S. Peterson describes Dale Morgan as having come “to know secrets of the Church archives that escaped even its curators, discovering, among other things, [former Church historian] Andrew Jenson’s habit of inserting sensitive materials into the relatively open stake histories. Having cleared such items through unsuspecting assistant Church historian Will Lund, he developed a certain confidence, painstakingly copying thousands of typescript pages and carefully working them through Lund’s scrutiny.” Charles S. Peterson, “Dale Morgan, Writer’s Project, and Mormon History As a Regional Study,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 57.

³⁶ See, for instance, *ibid*, 67-71.

Brodie's work on Joseph Smith at the beginning of her writing career was essentially "a solitary, semisecret project."³⁷

However, after the 1945 publication of *No Man Knows My History* and its complicated initial reception (helpfully chronicled and analyzed by Bringhurst),³⁸ Brodie's biography became the standard scholarly work on both Joseph Smith and the early history of Mormonism, a status that led eventually to the publication of a second edition of the book in 1971. If Brodie's notes and research for the 1945 first edition seem to have disappeared, her scrawled-and-then-typed notes for her changes and additions to the second edition were not discarded as her earlier notes had been. These notes, however, are as minimal as the changes Brodie made to the book for the second edition: so few changes were made that "the pagination remain[ed] the same as in the original 1945 edition."³⁹ Brodie's notes for the second edition thus amount to only fourteen handwritten pages (ten typed).⁴⁰

As it turns out, what one finds in Brodie's notes for the 1971 edition is very telling. Joseph Fielding Smith had begun in the 1960s to make the archives much more accessible, and he had handed the care of the archives over to the still more permissible Howard W. Hunter in 1970. But though the Church Archives had, by the time of Brodie's work on her second edition, been made quite available to researchers, Brodie did not attempt to fill in what she had herself identified as the major hole in her earlier

³⁷ Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie*, 71.

³⁸ Newell G. Bringhurst, "Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence. Varied Responses to Fawn M. Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*," in *Reconsidering "No Man Knows My History" Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect*, 39-59

³⁹ Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie*, 192.

⁴⁰ Fawn McKay Brodie Papers

research. Rather than returning to the Church Archives to consult the primary sources that had been denied and then offered to her for perusal in 1943—something that would have made her already standard biography more definitive still—she seems to have studied nothing but secondary sources, almost all of them psychological studies of Joseph Smith.⁴¹ As the twenty-one-page “supplement” in the 1971 edition makes clear, she had also been reading the works of several new Mormon historians, whose work she cites.⁴² But nothing of a documentary nature appears in Brodie’s second edition that does not appear in her first.

Twice, then, Fawn Brodie seems to have had the chance to peruse the definitive holdings of the Church Archives located in Salt Lake City, and, in both instances, she rejected the opportunity, deeming the situation to be either too “delicate” (in the first instance) or too much of a return to long-since abandoned pursuits (in the second instance).⁴³ Odd as this double refusal would come to sound, especially after the rise of the new Mormon history, it is arguably central to Fawn Brodie’s approach to her subject. Her biography is (as will be made clearer below) through and through colored by a rejection of the Church’s definitive archival holdings that was structurally parallel to—and likely inextricably intertwined with—her outright rejection of Joseph Smith’s claims. “I was convinced before I ever began writing the book that Joseph Smith was not a true

⁴¹ One page of the notes deal with the 1967 rediscovery of several Egyptian papyri in which Joseph Smith had claimed in 1835 to have found a record of the ancient patriarch Abraham, papyri that he then translated in part in 1835 and 1842 as the *Book of Abraham*. The remainder of the notes are excerpts from psychological studies of Joseph Smith, or from psychological studies Brodie hoped to use for her own psychological interpretation of the prophet. Fawn McKay Brodie Papers. On the Joseph Smith Papyri, see John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000).

⁴² Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 406-410, 422-423.

⁴³ Stephenson, “Fawn McKay Brodie,” 103

prophet—to use an old Mormon phrase,” she said in 1975.⁴⁴ As Dale Morgan explained to her in one of his mentoring letters, this one written six months after *No Man Knows My History* had been published, “I have an idea that you haven’t come full circle yet in liberating yourself from the church. . . . You feel a need to maintain yourself in a status of rebellion, sharp, constant, and unequivocal, and on an unassailable intellectual plane, argument held within the limits of reason, and the quicksands of emotion fenced out.”⁴⁵ That liberation-still-in-process, the need to write because of one’s own subjective position with respect to the subject matter, seems to have determined Fawn Brodie’s historiographical method to a powerful extent.

The Book

Before turning to an analysis—a “bibliohermeneutic”—of *No Man Knows My History*, it would be appropriate to provide a brief synopsis of the book, its interpretation, and its relationship to histories that preceded it.

No Man Knows My History traces the story of Joseph Smith from his earliest known ancestors in the Americas to his martyrdom in a Carthage, Illinois, jail. It hovers between history and biography, at times clearly concerned with uncovering the tale of Joseph Smith’s inner psyche, and at times more concerned with narrating the general history of Mormonism during the years of Joseph Smith’s life. Interestingly, these differing foci are distributed among three separable parts of the book. The first part (dealing with Joseph Smith’s first prophetic aspirations in New York) and the third part

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁵ Walker, *Dale Morgan*, 118. See also Mario S. DePillis, “Fawn McKay Brodie: At the Intersection of Secularism and Personal Alienation,” in *Reconsidering “No Man Knows My History” Fawn M Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect*, 94-126.

(dealing with Joseph Smith's final, theologically productive period in Illinois) are almost strictly biographical; the second part (dealing with the "in-between" period during which Joseph Smith and his followers found themselves separated into two colonies, one in Ohio and one in Missouri) is almost strictly historical.

Importantly, Brodie's interpretive method heavily depends on whether she is writing history or biography. In the first and third parts of *No Man Knows My History*, Brodie's work is heavily psychological—in fact, Freudian—and her ingenuity is thus dedicated to riddling out her often brilliant interpretations of the relatively limited primary sources she was using. In the second part of the book, Brodie's work is much more the work of the chronicler, and Joseph Smith functions only as a kind of name for the collective activities of the Mormons. The reasons for Brodie's having approached her subject in this way are relatively clear. The first (New York) and last (Illinois) periods of Joseph Smith's life are, without question, his most religiously controversial (the former being the period and place of his encounters with angels and deities, as well as of his translation of the *Book of Mormon*, and the latter being the period and place of his introduction of Mormon temple rituals and his various polygamous entanglements). Moreover, the second (Ohio/Missouri) period of Smith's life is pretty straightforward (being the period and place of his more this-worldly systematization of church organization and simple missionizing). Thus, wherever Joseph Smith becomes controversial, Brodie becomes psychological.

Thus, two aspects of Fawn Brodie's biography/history of Joseph Smith made it strikingly distinct from the publications that had preceded it. On the one hand, it was

arguably the first academic treatment of the Ohio/Missouri period of Smith's life, one that paid careful attention to the available historical records to construct a reliable chronicle of the events. On the other hand, when and where it ceased to be primarily historical, it blazed the trail of psychobiography, attempting to interpret the controversial aspects of Smith's career by employing what was, in the 1930s and 1940s, understood to be an important development in the scientific understanding of the individual human being: Freudian psychology. This doubly academic or even scientific approach profoundly shapes Brodie's historiographical work in the biography.

Historiographical Apparatuses

If the above "biography of the biography," paired with this brief synopsis of the book itself, begins to lay bare something of Fawn Brodie's historiographical approach, it can be made much clearer by an analysis of the footnotes, bibliography, and several appendices she attached to *No Man Knows My History*, as well as in the important rhetorical gestures that characterize her writing.

It is instructive to set Fawn Brodie side by side with the father of modern historiography, Leopold von Ranke, whose "path to the footnote" has been analyzed by Anthony Grafton.⁴⁶ Grafton describes the production of Ranke's first historical study, which he composed "as a whole," only afterwards "search[ing] his books and notes, extracts and summaries, for the evidence to support it."⁴⁷ By far, according to Grafton, what was most important to Ranke was the conclusions drawn; he was much less

⁴⁶ Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 62-93.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

interested in the story of how he had arrived at those conclusions—and perhaps far less convinced than others that the pathway to such conclusions could be marked by pinpointed citations. Brodie seems to have adopted the same philosophy, employing in her literary approach, in the words of Lavina Fielding Anderson, “the tools of *fictional* effect.”⁴⁸ Because she was concerned primarily with creating what Davis Bitton and Leonard Arrington would eventually describe as “a ‘story’ of the subject’s life that she considered true to the sources,”⁴⁹ it is as difficult with Brodie as it is with Ranke to determine whether she was “the first scientific historian” of Mormonism, “or the last Romantic” one.⁵⁰

Especially telling on this point is the fact that Brodie, quite like Ranke, preferred to displace her most impressive historical work to appendices. Grafton says, concerning Ranke’s appendices: “Appendices in fact formed the more distinguished and distinctive part of Ranke’s commentary on his own text. They called forth his best efforts as researcher and as writer.”⁵¹ Similarly, three appendices make up a full sixty pages of *No Man Knows My History*, and each has received more critical acclaim than anything in the narrative that makes up the biography itself. Appendix A (“Documents on the Early Life of Joseph Smith”), which provides court documents, affidavits, and other early testimonies concerning Joseph Smith that were not readily available in 1945, is perhaps less than remarkable.⁵² But Appendix B (“The Spaulding-Rigdon Theory”) has widely

⁴⁸ Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Literary Style in *No Man Knows My History*: An Analysis,” in *Reconsidering “No Man Knows My History”* Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect, 148.

⁴⁹ Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 114.

⁵⁰ Grafton, *The Footnote*, 70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵² Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 405-418.

been regarded as the definitive scholarly argument against the most common nineteenth-century interpretation of the source of the *Book of Mormon*,⁵³ and Appendix C (“The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith”) was taken as a starting place for serious researchers interested in Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy until Todd Compton’s *In Sacred Loneliness* was published in 1997.⁵⁴

But just as Brodie, like Ranke, could relegate her most complex historiographical forays to appendices, she also, like Ranke, “had footnotes forced upon [her],”⁵⁵ though in Brodie’s case this was less because of *actual* criticisms (as in Ranke’s case) than in *anticipation* of such criticisms. Indeed, as Anderson points out (using Brodie’s words about Joseph Smith to describe Brodie herself), Brodie wrote “with an intense consciousness of [her] audience.”⁵⁶ Brodie’s recognition that some of her sources might be questioned, for example, is visible in footnotes where Brodie describes her own care in doing research: “I have examined the records of these trials in the Woodstock, Vermont, courthouse”;⁵⁷ “I have examined all these newspapers with care.”⁵⁸ Several footnotes, moreover, betray her anxiety over not having consulted the definitive holdings in Salt Lake City: “Access to all these manuscripts is denied everyone save authorities of the Mormon Church”;⁵⁹ “From the unpublished Far West Record [in the Church Archives],

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 419-433. See also Lester E. Bush, “The Spaulding Theory Then and Now,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 4 (Autumn 1977): 41-63.

⁵⁴ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 434-465. See also Todd Compton, “Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives and Polygamy: A Critical View,” in *Reconsidering “No Man Knows My History”* Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect, 154-94.

⁵⁵ Grafton, *The Footnote*, 71.

⁵⁶ Anderson, “Literary Style in *No Man Knows My History*,” 151.

⁵⁷ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

as reprinted in *History of the Church . . .*”;⁶⁰ “In conformity with the church policy, however, [Joseph Fielding Smith] would not permit the manuscript, which he acknowledged to be in possession [sic] of the church library, to be examined”;⁶¹ “Butler’s own account of this flight was copied into the unpublished Journal History in the church library in Salt Lake City, under the date of August 6, 1838. See also John D. Lee: *Mormonism Unveiled* [a notorious anti-Mormon work], pp. 58-60.”⁶²

If these footnotes are only a few of those that make up the primary historiographical apparatus of *No Man Knows My History*, they are unquestionably the most revelatory. Collectively, they color the other, more standard footnotes that make up the bulk of Brodie’s citations. It would seem that, for Brodie, the historiographical apparatus of footnoted citations was primarily a way of reassuring the reader that the author had done her research as thoroughly as was, at the time, possible. That is, footnotes were, for her, a means of assuaging the reader, rather than of inviting her or him to take up the historiographical enterprise in turn. This method of mollifying the reader is also arguably behind Brodie’s decision to place the most serious historical work in appendices. Found only at the end of the book and quite apart from the narrative—indeed, the appendices are referred to only in the footnotes—the appendices are so many additional reassurances that the author has played the part of the responsible historian.

Brodie’s bibliography, of course, plays a similar role. Besides providing a relatively comprehensive list of the sources Brodie used, and besides giving one a

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 226.

glimpse also into the rather limited manuscript sources Brodie had to work with because of her (eventually self-imposed) lack of access to the archives, the bibliography preserves a few words from Brodie herself about the sources she consulted. Quite telling is the first line of her introduction to the bibliography: “There is a stupendous literature on Mormonism, almost all of which is valueless as source material for the study of Joseph Smith.”⁶³ She thus goes on to explain that the “legion of secondary source books that furnished background for the life and times of Joseph Smith are not listed” in the bibliography.⁶⁴ The bibliography is thus meant only to show what little source material was available, though Brodie was able to construct a rather remarkable bibliography, despite the relative inaccessibility of the most definitive resources.

But, valuable as each of these historiographical tools are—appendices, footnotes, bibliographies, etc.—what Brodie employed best in her biography was her literary talent. Even reactionary Mormon critics agreed that *No Man Knows My History* was compellingly written, and that it moves with fluidity through the story it tells. Of course, as Lavina Fielding Anderson sums up Brodie’s literary style, though the biographer’s “literary devices are noteworthy in their impact,” this is “not because they are unusual or unconventional. . . . [They are the] standard literary techniques of any educated writer or widely read person fifty years ago.”⁶⁵ But Anderson seems to have missed the peculiar *historiographical* force with which Brodie employs such “standard literary techniques.” Brodie’s fluid prose encourages one to accept the narrative of the biography itself quite

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁶⁵ Anderson, “Literary Style in *No Man Knows My History*,” 135

apart from the historiographical apparatuses that accompany it. By making the reading an experience one does not wish to interrupt, Brodie distracts her readers as much as possible from questions of historiography, helping them to see, to quote Noel Coward, that “having to read a footnote resembles having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love.”⁶⁶

In short, the literary techniques of *No Man Knows My History* reinforce the manner in which Brodie treats her various historiographical apparatuses. By drawing attention away from matters of historiography to the narratively portrayed conclusions she presents in the biography itself, Brodie still more definitively assigns to the citational systems she utilizes the task solely of ensuring the reader that the author—or even the storyteller—has done the appropriate research work. The same point might, of course, be put the other way around: the various historiographical apparatuses utilized in *No Man Knows My History* would seem collectively to be employed so as not to distract the reader from the narrative itself, which attempts consistently to deliver literarily crafted but nonetheless carefully reasoned conclusions about its subject matter.

As Anderson quite rightly notes, it is Fawn Brodie’s ironic tone that is her most constant and skillfully employed literary device—a perfect example of which can be found in Brodie’s description of the triple visit of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith: “Three times that night the spirit appeared, as angels are wont to do, for, to be authentic, celestial truth must be thrice repeated.”⁶⁷ Anderson explains that this use of irony allows Brodie to maintain “an authorial and ironic distance from [Joseph Smith], even when she

⁶⁶ As in Grafton, *The Footnote*, 69-70.

⁶⁷ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 39.

uses other devices to engage the reader.”⁶⁸ In the end, it is this “authorial distance” that proves most crucial to Fawn Brodie’s historiographical poise: because of the condescension implied by its use, Brodie’s unvarying irony allows her to maintain an air of authority, one that is the very glue that holds together all of her other efforts to minimize the historiographical question and to maintain the uninterrupted flow of the story she has to tell about Joseph Smith.

The Preface

If one must dig into whatever primary sources are available to reconstruct the actual process of research that went into Brodie’s book, and if one must then read into so many details in the book itself to begin to wager hypotheses about her employment of historiographical techniques, it is in reading the preface to *No Man Knows My History* that one can take up the perhaps more straightforward task of seeing what she has to say herself about her historiography and the status of the archive in her approach to history. There one finds a number of confirmations of all that has been insinuated above.

The first words of the preface that opens *No Man Knows My History* explain the central importance of her title to her historiographical project:

It was in a funeral sermon that the Mormon prophet flung a challenge to his future biographers. To an audience of ten thousand in his bewitching city of Nauvoo Joseph Smith said on April 7, 1844: “*You don’t know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame anyone for not believing my*

⁶⁸ Anderson, “Literary Style in *No Man knows My History*,” 140.

history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself”⁶⁹

These words deserve serious attention.

Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that the importance of the *title* of Fawn Brodie’s study of Joseph Smith has not received more attention in discussions of Mormon historiography. If it was with Brodie’s biography that writing about Mormon history became (or began to become) a discipline, then the discipline was essentially founded by the publication of a book whose very title suggested the essential *impossibility* of writing Mormon history! Brodie’s preface has much to say about this impossibility. For example, the first impossibility she identifies is the unavoidable difficulty involved in writing about the founder of a still-living religious tradition: “In official Mormon biographies [Smith] has been made a prophet of greater stature than Moses. Nineteenth-century preachers made him a lecherous rogue; and twentieth-century chroniclers have been bemused with what they diagnosed as paranoiac delusions.”⁷⁰

Much more critical, though, to Brodie’s central claim that writing Mormon history is *impossible* comes further along: “There are few men, however, who have written so much and told so little about themselves [as Joseph Smith]. To search in his six-volume autobiography for the inner springs of his character is to come away baffled. . . His story is the antithesis of a confession.”⁷¹ Here Brodie is essentially cursing what was the central primary source for her work: the six volumes of the seven-volume *History*

⁶⁹ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, vii.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

of the Church that deal with the life of Joseph Smith. But there would seem to be something disingenuous about Brodie's complaints. The *History of the Church* volumes Brodie used were not a "six-volume autobiography" in which Joseph Smith had "written so much," but rather the product of a number of different editors and compilers who did the majority of their work after Joseph Smith had already died. Thus Dean C. Jessee could take Brodie to task in his 1976 paper on "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History":

Frustrated by her failure to understand the changing images that emerged from the pages of Joseph's *History*, [Brodie] concluded that his prophetic claims were "an evolutionary process," and that "when he chose to write of this evolution in his *History of the Church* he distorted the past in the interest of promoting his public image as a gifted young prophet."⁷²

Of course, while Jessee's criticism is *correct*—Brodie *was* wrong to take the first six volumes of the *History of the Church* as an autobiography in any twentieth- or twenty-first-century sense—it is not quite *fair*, since Brodie had not ultimately had access to the archival holdings that would have revealed to her the extent to which the *History of the Church* was a product of Smith's followers, rather than of the prophet himself.⁷³ This is made clear by a few of Brodie's footnotes where she expresses frustration at not being able to penetrate the archival record behind the *History of the Church*. A couple of examples: "This history [was] compiled chiefly from Smith's manuscript journals on file

⁷² Dean C. Jessee, "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 45.

⁷³ In line with much eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history, as Jessee shows, the *History of the Church* was written *as if* it had been the production of Joseph Smith himself, though it was not: accounts written by other people were altered so as to have been written by the prophet, etc. See Jessee, "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," 23-46.

in Salt Lake City . . .”;⁷⁴ “Joseph admittedly did not begin writing his history until 1838, and the editors of this history do not state from what manuscript source in the Utah Church library this journal entry came. Access to all these manuscripts is denied everyone save authorities of the Mormon Church.”⁷⁵

And yet Fawn Brodie nonetheless overstates her case in her preface. As the two footnotes cited above make clear, Brodie was aware that the *History of the Church* was not entirely the product of Joseph Smith’s own work, but she nonetheless went on to suggest in her preface:

Legend has it that shortly before his death [Smith] put all his private records in a great copper pot and ordered William Huntington to bury them deeper than a plow’s furrow in some obscure corner in Nauvoo. But even if these should miraculously come to light, it is doubtful if they would be any more self-searching than the records already published.⁷⁶

Brodie would, it seems, have been at least somewhat irresponsible in her handling of the historical record. But it is not irresponsibility that is interesting here. Rather, while Brodie overstates her case in her preface, it is not *the fact that* she does it, but rather *the way in which* she does it, that is so interesting.

Of primary interest, then, is less the obviously self-justificatory air of her preface than her remarkable double claim that (1) the “anti-confessional” *History of the Church* is as definitive as anything that could eventually surface, and that (2) anything *actually*

⁷⁴ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 21.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

definitive *must* have been destroyed or misplaced. With these two claims, Brodie places at the heart of the historiographical task of writing about Mormonism an essential archival void—not the lack of an archive as institution, but the lack of an archival record within the institutional archive—one that she assumes Joseph Smith himself purposefully created. Indeed, the central image of the story of Smith’s early life on Brodie’s telling is the empty wooden chest in which Brodie’s Smith pretended to keep the gold plates from which he would eventually pretend to translate the *Book of Mormon*. It is a telling symbol. For Brodie, Mormon history is the story of a person (and then an institution) who constructs an empty archive, gaining power and influence by pretending that the empty chest is filled with archival treasures, and securing power and influence by eventually producing a translation of the inaccessible (and, for Brodie, essentially non-existent) archival materials.

It was to absolutize this archival void that Brodie named her entire biography after Joseph’s almost passing—and by no means necessarily accurately recorded—claim that “No man knows my history.”⁷⁷ The title thus announces much more the central historiographical problem Brodie faced in writing about the prophet—in part by her own choosing—than it does something essential about the prophet himself. And this allowed Brodie to construct an entire historiographical method around the problem she had encountered. While Joseph Smith himself was a kind of historical void, he nonetheless, as Brodie explained further in her preface, “roused a storm” wherever he went, “and from

⁷⁷ To compare the various contemporary accounts of Joseph Smith’s sermon during which this statement was apparently made, see Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 340-400.

his earliest years country newspapers gave him liberal publicity,” “court records” noted his troublesome legal history, and various admirers and enemies noted their opinions of the prophet.⁷⁸ Brodie’s task—what she saw as the central task of the historian of Mormonism—was the “assembling of these [peripheral] documents,” these traces of the prophet’s presence that at least marked the contours of the void that was Joseph Smith.⁷⁹ She assigned to herself and to anyone who would follow her in the work of writing Mormon history the task, not of hermeneutically attempting to make sense of the primary sources that *are* available, but of working with all the peripheral material, “of sifting first-hand account from third-hand plagiarism, of fitting Mormon and non-Mormon narratives into a mosaic that makes credible history, absorbing all the while the long-forgotten realities of religion and politics between 1805 and 1844.”⁸⁰

The result, oddly enough, is that what Fawn Brodie said about Joseph Smith quite appropriately describes her as his biographer. Indeed, one might insert her into every word she wrote about Joseph Smith in the last paragraph of her preface. The paragraph as it stands in the biography:

The source of his power lay not in his doctrine but in his person, and the rare quality of his genius was due not to his reason but to his imagination. He was a mythmaker of prodigious talent. And after a hundred years the myths he created are still an energizing force in the lives of a million followers. The moving power of Mormonism was a fable—one that few

⁷⁸ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, viii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

converts stopped to question, for its meaning seemed profound and its inspiration was contagious.⁸¹

Now, to paraphrase the same with reference to Brodie:

The source of her power lay not in her historiography but in her person, and the rare quality of her genius was due not to her reason but to her imagination. She was a mythmaker of prodigious talent. And after fifty years the myths she created are still an energizing force in the work of a thousand followers. The moving power of *No Man Knows My History* was a fable—one that few readers stopped to question, for its meaning seemed profound and its inspiration was contagious.

Historiographical Impact

There is little question that *No Man Knows My History's* inspiration was contagious. Not only did it effectively launch the enterprise of Mormon history as such, but it has also—despite the rise of the much more emphatically scientific new Mormon history—commanded a conspicuous and consistent place in Mormon history. As Walker, Whittaker, and Allen point out, Brodie's book “demanded an increased openness about Mormon origins and about Mormon history generally.”⁸² David Paulsen agrees: “By provoking Mormon historians and other scholars interested in the Mormon past, Brodie's book acted as a catalyst to start the New Mormon History.”⁸³ According to Terryl Givens, Brodie's function as provocateur was rooted in her willingness to grant “a high

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁸² Walker, Whittaker, and Allen, *Mormon History*, 47.

⁸³ David L. Paulsen, “The Search for Cultural Origins of Mormon Doctrine,” in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 30.

level of intellectual and creative capacity” to Joseph Smith, who had been treated, by Mormons and non-Mormons alike, as a kind of uneducated rustic, even if a superhuman hero or an irrepressible demoniac. Thus, even as she was obviously critical of Smith, Brodie’s biography was, as Givens suggests, significant for its “add[ing] a new dimension—a credible scholarly dimension—to attacks on the truthfulness and legitimacy of Mormonism’s orthodox rendering of its own history. This was something the church had never confronted to any significant degree,” and it led inexorably to efforts to increase the sophistication of the Church in the handling of its history.⁸⁴

But Brodie’s influence on subsequent historians of Mormonism is as much suffocating as it is undeniable. Recognizing Brodie’s vast importance for Mormon history (“If there had been no Fawn Brodie, Mormon historians would have had to invent her”), Roger Launius argues: “The degree to which Mormon historiography has been shaped by the long shadow of Fawn Brodie since 1945 is both disturbing and unnecessary, but it has been and remains a persistent tradition in the study of Mormonism’s first generation.”⁸⁵ “The result,” according to Launius, “has been a stunting of Mormon studies,” a focus, on the part of Mormon historians, on “what Charles S. Peterson has appropriately called a [historiographical] ‘cult of the Prophet.’”⁸⁶

At any rate, as Launius rightly argues, “it [would] not be until an author steps forward who can create as compelling a portrait of the Mormon founder” as Fawn Brodie

⁸⁴ Terry L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211

⁸⁵ Roger D. Launius, “From Old to New Mormon History: Fawn Brodie and the Legacy of Scholarly Analysis of Mormonism,” in *Reconsidering “No Man Knows My History” Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect*, 195.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

that the field of Mormon history would be able to move beyond the Brodie's influence.⁸⁷ The mythical portrait of a Joseph Smith at once so devastatingly hollow and yet so remarkably charismatic as Brodie's—a portrait that hangs as much on the literary structure of Brodie's narrative as it does on the reassuring historiographical apparatuses that underpin the continuity of that narrative—would have to have the void at its center filled in with something, something documented or citable, before it could be replaced.

Preliminary Conclusions

The three stories that have been told in this chapter are all inextricably intertwined. The story of Fawn Brodie's actual research cannot be separated either from the careful construction—both in terms of historiographical apparatus and in terms of narrative technique—employed in *No Man Knows My History*, or from the very portrait of the Prophet Joseph Smith sketched out as early as the three-page preface of Brodie's study. Brodie's Joseph Smith is the Joseph Smith of an inaccessible archive, or really, of an accessible archive that the historian feels it is too “delicate” to approach.

Indeed, it might be most appropriate to conclude this chapter with a brief reflection on the delicacy of the archive in Brodie's historiography—taken, here, as representative of American historiography generally, before the enthronement of social history.

Everything that has here been recounted about Brodie's work in both researching and writing *No Man Knows My History* suggests that she carefully constructed her subject (Joseph Smith) as a Freudian neurotic, plagued by his unconscious. And her

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

refusal (twice) to go into the archives when she was finally given the chance might well be understood as a profoundly Freudian move. (One is reminded of the moment in Jean-Paul Sartre's heavily Freudian play *No Exit*, where the door out of hell finally opens to Garcin's shouts and beatings, only to have Garcin decide suddenly, "I shall not go.")⁸⁸ As an orthodox Freudian (an identification that became much more obvious in the supplemented second edition of *No Man Knows My History*,⁸⁹ as well as in Brodie's subsequent biographies of other historical figures), Brodie could feel comfortable only when she was reading and interpreting *symptoms*; and she knew she would be at a complete loss if she were to come face to face with an actual psyche in the uncanny form of the archival trace. Her genius, it could be said, was—like Freud's—inseparable from her self-appointed nearness to the symptomatic surface and distance from the archival underneath.

If one could suggest that this characterization is something of a stretch when dealing with the 1945 edition of *No Man Knows My History*, it is more secure in terms of the 1971 edition. By that time, any delicacy surrounding her presence in the archives would long have vanished, and her most outspoken critics in the Mormon Church had moved on to other projects. But it was precisely then that she brought her most explicitly Freudian material to the table, content to reinforce, in the light of developments in the field of psychology, the interpretation she had wagered twenty-five years earlier. That the only notes surviving from the entire process of researching *No Man Knows My History*, in 1938-1945 and in 1970-1971, concern psychological interpretations of Joseph

⁸⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit, and Three Other Plays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 43.

⁸⁹ Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 2nd ed., 405-425.

Smith is worth highlighting: Brodie launched Mormon history with a heavily Freudian accent.

It is precisely thus that she so profoundly reflected her times. Coming from a generation in which “any educated person . . . read Freud,”⁹⁰ Brodie joined with other historians in recognizing that, though they collectively remained quite as committed to “great men” as had been the historians of the nineteenth century, they could not avoid seeing that such “great men” had been problematized drastically by the insights foisted upon them by the advent of psychoanalysis. The archival trace itself had taken on a significantly different meaning. Whereas before, the archives had been under the control of whomever it was that had the power to determine the meaning of the course of history, now historians had discovered that history that had once been considered unknowable—history concerning which the “great men” could say “no man knows”—could be read by paying psychoanalytical attention to symptomatic details in the published (rather than archival) record.

This change in historiographical method amounted, importantly, to a kind of revolution without revolution. Like the political revolutionaries who had traditionally stormed not only the palaces of those whom they sought to overthrow but also the archives themselves, effectively revolutionary historians could now topple the supposed greatness of the “great men” simply by paying attention to what was available in the great figure’s public sayings. Building on a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” it had become possible essentially to circumvent the archive, to avoid it, to render it—whether

⁹⁰ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), xv

practically, historiographically, narratively, or mythically—void. But, of course, further conclusions about Brodie’s historiographical methods must be postponed until chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW MORMON HISTORY: LEONARD J. ARRINGTON

Leonard Arrington was only two years younger than Fawn M. Brodie. Born in rural Idaho in 1917, he had something of the same idyllic childhood Brodie had had, and more or less during the same years. Because he grew up a little further from the heart of Mormon country—and perhaps because his family was quite a bit further from the heart of the Mormon hierarchy—Arrington grew up with a Mormonism that was a little less culturally problematic than Brodie’s. As Gary Topping puts it, “The Arringtons’ brand of Mormonism was much more individualistic, gleaned from their own reading of church literature and adapted to their local circumstances, than they would have known in a largely Mormon community.”¹ This resulted in a Mormonism that was less characterized by a subtle conflict between than a harmonious blend of liberal and conservative approaches to the religion.

Arrington left the farm to begin undergraduate studies at the University of Idaho in 1935, the very year Fawn Brodie arrived at the University of Chicago to begin her graduate work in English. Interestingly, Arrington’s mentor at the university was George S. Tanner, a former student at the University of Chicago Divinity School who had left Chicago a cultural rather than a fully disaffected Mormon (as Brodie would become). He helped Arrington to place “first emphasis on the Christian virtues, and second emphasis on the more unique aspects of Mormonism.”² Whatever the result ultimately was for

¹ Gary Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington: A Historian’s Life* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008), 21.

² Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 23-24.

Arrington's faith,³ the disciple's positive attitude towards Mormonism was powerfully shaped by his developing conviction: so long as one avoided a kind of fundamentalism about one's Mormonism, it was something to be quite proud of—an attitude that would come to saturate *Great Basin Kingdom*.

In 1939, when Brodie was in the first stages of writing *No Man Knows My History*, Arrington found himself with a teaching fellowship to fund his doctoral studies in economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The complexities of his graduate education, a whirlwind marriage, and three years in Italy and North Africa during World War II made his pathway to Mormon studies much slower than Brodie's. It was not until 1946 that he would take up studying Mormonism in earnest.

A turning point in his developing interest seems to have been an academic conference—apparently the first he ever attended—during December of 1939. There he found “a good seat and happened to recognize Richard T. Ely, one of the seminal figures in American economic thought, then eighty-five years of age.”⁴ Ely, significantly, had been the author of what was arguably the first academic treatment of Mormonism, “Economic Aspects of Mormonism,” an article published in 1903 in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. Arrington and Ely struck up a conversation on Mormonism and the taming of the West, and the young graduate student had found an inspiration for his work. He would later say that “his dissertation ‘was merely an extension of [Ely's] pioneering work.’”⁵ At any rate, it was only a few years before Arrington was following in Ely's

³ Topping presents a nice analysis of Arrington's sometimes questioned faith in Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 206-215.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵ *Ibid.*

footsteps and sorting out the economic meaning of the Mormon settlement of the Great Basin.

Research and Writing

The first chapter of Leonard Arrington's 1998 autobiography recounts the fascinating story of how he won access to an almost inaccessible archival collection. He explains:

Twenty-nine years old, I had taken a position as an assistant professor of economics at Utah State Agricultural College (USAC) in Logan [Utah] and intended to write my doctoral dissertation on the economic activities of the Latter-day Saints in Mormon country in the last half of the nineteenth century. Virtually all the pertinent records were housed in the Church Historian's Library and Archives, located on the third floor of the Church Administration Building.⁶

Playing his cards carefully, the first person in the Church's hierarchy Arrington approached was the Harvard graduate and former University of Utah President, John A. Widtsoe, at the time one of the more academically inclined of the Church's twelve apostles. Widtsoe's encouragement was coupled with his sage advice:

Widtsoe acknowledged that [Joseph Fielding] Smith, his senior in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, took a proprietary attitude toward the vast archival materials in his care and was seldom persuaded that they should be made available to scholars. . . . Widtsoe [counseled]: First I was to ask

⁶ Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 11.

to see published books and read them a few days. Then I should ask for theses and dissertations and read those a few days. Then I should ask for the Journal History of the Church, which would likely take me many months, even years. After that I should ask for specific documents I needed. Over time, I would build up their confidence in me, they would see me as a serious scholar, and they would give me about everything I wanted to use. As Widtsoe put it, like the proverbial camel, I would stick my head in the tent, gradually move farther in, and ultimately carry the whole tent away.⁷

The Journal History of the Church, which would prove so vital to Arrington's research, is a scrapbook history of the Mormon Church, assembled by various Church Historians beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. It consists, in Arrington's own words, "approximately 750 large volumes of chronologically arranged documents," including "typescripts from diaries, letters, reports, office journals, and newspaper clippings."⁸

Thus it was that Arrington found himself approaching the very same Joseph Fielding Smith who had denied Brodie's archival requests only three years earlier.

Fortunately, Arrington recorded an account of the encounter with Smith in his diary:

I opened the door, walked in, and timidly asked, "Elder Smith, may I see you for a moment?"

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-13. See also David J. Whittaker, "Leonard James Arrington: His Life and Work," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 26

⁸ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 415. Unless otherwise noted, all references to *Great Basin Kingdom* are to the 1958 first edition.

He did not look up, did not say anything, made no sound. He seemed to be copying some scriptures out of the Bible and continued to do so. I stood in front of his desk for what seemed to be an interminable period. He didn't acknowledge me in any way. After I had stood there stone silent for several minutes he finally looked up tentatively, still holding the pencil in his hand and the Bible open to a given place. He said—he was obviously irritated—“Well?” I said, “Elder Smith, I have been talking with Brother Lund about doing a doctoral dissertation on the economic activities of the Latter-day Saints. For this purpose I need your permission to do research in the archives. I have talked with Dr. Widtsoe who thinks it is an appropriate topic, and I feel sure there is material in the Archives that will be helpful. May I have your permission to use the materials here in the Library?”

Elder Smith simply said, “Well, you may,” and looked down again at the books and papers on his desk and resumed his copying of scriptures. He did not look up at me again; he did not dismiss me. I was not quite sure he was through with me. I waited another two or three minutes, and he continued his work, so I said, “Thank you, Elder Smith,” and walked out.⁹

Communicating to the staff that he had been granted access, Arrington set to work.

Arrington apparently followed the advice Widtsoe had given him:

⁹ Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 13.

I spent the first week reading published works. The second week I reviewed theses and dissertations. The third week I called for the legal-size volumes of the Journal History, conscientiously studying each, page by page, at the rate of about one volume per day. There were a total of about two hundred scrapbooks for the period 1847 to 1905, and I finished the task in the summers of 1946, 1947, and 1948.¹⁰

Arrington took extensive notes during the three summers he spent in the archives, something that at times roused the suspicion of A. William Lund, the assistant church historian. Part of Lund's job was to review notes taken by those studying in the archives and confiscate any that concerned him. But, as Gary Topping explains, Arrington "found that circumventing Lund's capricious criteria was ridiculously easy."¹¹ Arrington would later reminisce, "I made the notes on one of their Public Service typewriters and always made carbons. So I had the notes whether or not he returned them (he often did not return them), and whether or not he crossed them out (many items he did cross out, but I could see no consistent policy and thought it so arbitrary that I was sure he couldn't remember what he had approved and what he had not)."¹²

Arrington's research was painstaking, as his notes—which are still extant in the Arrington Papers at Utah State University's Merrill Library—make quite clear. An exemplary half-page of notes from Arrington's papers shows the detail with which he went through the two hundred relevant volumes of the Journal History of the Church.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹¹ Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington*, 42.

¹² Quoted in *ibid.*

Marking every date in which some item appeared in the Journal History that referred in some way to one of economic cooperative endeavors he was researching, Arrington created an index for the two hundred volumes of information on his subject:

J. H. Ref. to Individ. Coops [Journal History References to Individual Cooperative Orders organized by Brigham Young in the 1860s and 1870s in Utah]

1890

19 Dec – Mendon

24 Dec – Provo

29 Dec – Parowan

20 Dec p. 7 – Coops keep herd in Ogden

1891

5 Jan – Scipio

11 Jan – others

17 Jan – Cedar City

1 Feb – Parowan

18 Jan Stock Improvement Assn.

23 Jan – “ “ “ (Bps. Behind stock herds)

6 Mar – “ “ “ Utah County

20 Mar – “ “ “

22 Feb – Coop stock herds at Farmington¹³

¹³ Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University.

After completing his work on the *Journal History of the Church*, Arrington began to ask for manuscript material beginning in the summer of 1949:

I began inspecting ledgers, diaries, organizational records, and company files. In asking for these one at a time, I was never denied any desired item. [Archivist] Earl Olson was [actually] delighted that someone was interested in seeing these documents, most of which had never been available for scholarly analysis. I was even given the privilege of searching subject files in the interior of the archives.¹⁴

What Fawn Brodie had been offered but which she rejected in the course of a single day, Arrington had to earn over the course of four summers of research.

Having worked so systematically through the archives, and having essentially earned free access through three summers of “honest and comprehensive research,”¹⁵ he developed what his later assistant, Ronald Esplin, would describe as a lack of patience for those who “wrote history without a thorough acquaintance with this abundant documentary record or for those who brushed aside that obligation with complaints that ‘the Church was not cooperative’ and records were not accessible.”¹⁶ Indeed, as Esplin went on to say, Arrington had “confirmed that with patience, demonstrated competence,

¹⁴ Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 16.

¹⁵ Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington*, 42. One might ask whether political, religious, academic, or sexual dynamics did not have as much to do with Arrington’s access to the archives as the slow, methodical nature of his research. Actually, there seems to be little evidence that any of these played a major role. Arrington’s political leanings were far more liberal than most Latter-day Saints, and especially than those in charge of the archives at the time, religiously, he was what Mormons refer to as “an inactive,” meaning that he was not a fully practicing Latter-day Saint. Though he was a PhD candidate and a male, these do not seem to have had a strong impact on his access: Juanita Brooks, a female lay historian without academic training, had been a frequent researcher in the archives since the 1930s

¹⁶ Ronald K. Esplin, “Documents and Dusty Tomes: The Adventures of Arrington, Esplin, and Young,” *Journal of Mormon History* 25 (Spring 1999): 108.

and good will, doors opened and documents were available.”¹⁷ Indeed, Davis Bitton could later say that Arrington had become “a convenient symbol to many people” that “the Church Archives is a professionally run institution,” and that “its rules of access are not arbitrary.”¹⁸ As Gary Topping would eventually summarize one of the two ways that *Great Basin Kingdom* was great, “Arrington’s quiet persistence in working his way into and through the archives of the Mormon Church opened our eyes to the rich depths of the sources it contained, sources that no previous scholar had been able to exploit that thoroughly.”¹⁹

After four years of archival research and the publication of a smattering of articles drawing on that research, Arrington began to turn to the actual writing of his dissertation. During a six-month leave of absence (without pay) in the winter of 1951-1952, he wrote the dissertation in its entirety, earning his Ph.D. (in economics) at last in 1952. The finished product was what he would later describe as “eleven more or less independent essays” on Utah Mormon economics.²⁰ When he was encouraged to submit the dissertation for publication, he began to revise his manuscript, eventually coming to see that he needed to rework the very structure of the piece: the “eleven more or less independent essays” that made up the dissertation needed to be rewritten into a single

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Davis Bitton, “Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 10-11. It should be noted that when Arrington began his research in the archives, he had lapsed in his commitment to Mormonism. Though he had never been disaffected, he later explained that it was precisely through his experience in the archives in 1946-1949 that he found “a deepening of my testimony of the gospel” and reason to resume “full activity in the church.” Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 18.

¹⁹ Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington*, 69-70.

²⁰ Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 32. The title of his dissertation was “Mormon Economic Policies and Their Implementation on the Western Frontier, 1847-1900.”

“chronological narrative of the development and evolution of Mormon institutions, practices, and policies.”²¹

Granted sabbatical leave from USAC for the academic year 1956-1957 and awarded two fellowships for the same period, Arrington left Utah for the Huntington Library in San Marino, California to begin converting his dissertation into a publishable monograph.²² Having spent an inordinate amount of his research time in the archives—and at some distance from any definitive secondary sources on the economics of the nineteenth-century West—Arrington found his work at the Huntington to be immensely important. As Topping explains, “the library’s vast collection of books and periodicals enabled [Arrington] to establish a broad context for the research he had done in the church archives and gave the book [*Great Basin Kingdom*] a much larger significance than the dissertation.”²³ This was not without consequence: “From a manuscript that George Ellsworth a year before had said ‘was too detailed, it didn’t have a central theme, and it was, to be honest, tedious and dull,’ Leonard Arrington had made a book that revolutionized Mormon studies and became one of the fundamental works in western American history.”²⁴

Great Basin Kingdom was published by Harvard University Press in 1958 (as arranged by the Committee on Research in Economic History, with which organization Arrington had been working since 1954), effectively launching the new Mormon history.

²¹ Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 32.

²² Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 60. Arrington had been awarded one fellowship to study at the Huntington Library, and another to pursue studies at Yale University. However, because “the Huntington decided to extend the fellowship for the rest of the year,” Arrington never went to Yale *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Though *Great Basin Kingdom* would be republished in a paperback edition by the University of Nebraska in 1966, in a second academic edition by the University of Utah in 1993, and by the University of Illinois in 2004, Arrington never changed the text of the publication, neglecting even to add a supplement.²⁵ However, he arguably rewrote much of *Great Basin Kingdom* in *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*.²⁶ Published in 1976, four years after Arrington had taken charge of the Church Archives as the official Church Historian, this later book was clearly the product of further and more sophisticated archival work.

The Book

Ronald Walker describes *Great Basin Kingdom* as “an unusual compound of Arrington’s economic, religious, and social interests” which “defied easy classification.”²⁷ It is chronologically arranged, beginning with the legal incorporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (originally as The Church of Christ) in 1830, and tracing the economic adventures of the Mormon people until the years immediately following the Church’s cessation of the practice of plural marriage. Arrington broke off his study at this point of Mormon history (1900) primarily because the concession to legislation against plural marriage was historically intertwined with a decision on the part of the Mormon Church as well no longer to aim at achieving economic independence from the United States of America.

²⁵ Ronald W. Walker, however, added a significant introduction to the 2004 fourth version.

²⁶ *Building the City of God* is actually Arrington’s systematic reworking and greatly expanding an unfinished manuscript written by Feramorz Fox.

²⁷ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, 4th ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), xxiv.

The story, as Arrington tells it, is almost mythical in the broadness of its scope: not only is the water of the irrigation canals made into something like a divine figure in the tale, the entire narrative portrays a time before time, a sacred era before the collapse of the boundary between Utah Mormonism and American society. Significantly, though, Arrington's version of what that collapse signifies is hardly narrow. Rather than simply seeing the "surrender" of Mormonism as a the beginning of an influx into Mormonism of American economic culture, he sees it also as having laid the foundation for American adaptations of uniquely Mormon practices. The last line of *Great Basin Kingdom* attempts to leave the reader with a sense of this point in particular: "The design of the Kingdom, once despised as backward, is now part of the heritage which Americans are passing on to governments and peoples in many parts of the world."²⁸

Arrington's book was perhaps much more in continuity with its predecessors than was Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith. However, it differed from those predecessors in important ways—in ways significant enough that *Great Basin Kingdom* marked the birth of the new Mormon history, thus accomplishing something that none of the earlier treatments had been able to do. Arrington's unique achievement was his weaving together of a narrative that was at once palatable to academic historians and to lay members of the Mormon Church. Avoiding both the overly dry language and axiomatic anti-religiosity of the mere academic *and* the subtly laudatory and committed tone of the LDS historian, Arrington constructed what seemed to be an exemplary "middle way" of

²⁸ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*. 412

doing history. It was this achievement that was to make *Great Basin Kingdom* the beginning of an entire movement.

Historiographical Apparatuses

As with Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*, the story of the actual research and the writing of Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* is quite revealing. However, also as with Brodie's book, a penetrating analysis of Arrington's relationship to the archives must be based on a careful investigation of the historiographical apparatuses and literary style of *Great Basin Kingdom*.

That Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* had been published with a popular, non-academic press had unquestionably determined its use of historiographical apparatuses to some extent. That Leonard Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* was published with a pre-eminent academic press—Harvard University Press—likewise influenced how he should employ such apparatuses. Indeed, in a summary analysis of how serious historical research and writing was being undertaken in the very years Harvard University Press issued *Great Basin Kingdom*, Boyd Shafer explained: "Still another [current] issue concerns the best form for written history, narrative (literary) or analytic (scientific). Each variety has its advocates and practitioners. The 'professionals' generally have used the analytic approach, the 'amateurs' the narrative."²⁹ That Arrington was working with an established academic press, this establishment approach to history heavily determined the literary style and structure of his inaugural work.

²⁹ Boyd C. Shafer, et al., *Historical Study in the West* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), 222

It is also significant that Arrington was trained as an economist, rather than as a historian (Gary Topping points out, quite bluntly, that Arrington was “mostly self-trained” in history *per se*).³⁰ Though he was arguably more given to “a humanistic type of economics . . . in contrast to a more mechanistic, social-science economics dominated by mathematics, equations, and graphs,”³¹ he had certainly been trained during his graduate education to analyze historical and economic relationships in terms of “impersonal economic forces expressible in mathematical terms.”³² *Great Basin Kingdom* is, in the end, a profound interweaving of the two approaches. Though it is—or really, eventually became, in the process of Arrington’s Huntington research—a single narrative history, it is nonetheless guided at almost every turn in the road by sign-posts written with economic analytical language.

One of Arrington’s most skillfully used historiographical apparatuses nicely illustrates this interweaving. Though Arrington never bores his readers with equations or graphs, he nonetheless presents them with a healthy frequency of tables, especially further along in the book. One table, for example, “summarizes the essential facts with respect to the Church Trains [wagon teams] of 1861-1868,” recording the year, number of wagons, number of men, number of oxen, amount of flour carried, the destination of the team, and the estimated number of immigrants headed to Utah.³³ This table, moreover, brings with it a full five footnotes (citations and explanatory notes for the

³⁰ Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50. Ronald Walker says that Arrington increasingly gained a “distaste for the rise of statistical and quantitative analysis.” Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 4th ed., xxiii.

³² *Ibid*

³³ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 208.

narrative text of Arrington’s book appear as endnotes located in the back matter of the book) and a paragraph of cited sources:

Source: Compiled from Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, pp. 65-78; Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, V, 109-110; “1866 and 1868 Emigration Team Accounts,” MS., Church Historian’s Office; Andrew Jenson, ed., “Latter-day Saints Emigration from Wyoming, Nebraska—1864-1866,” *Nebraska History Magazine*, XVII (1936), 113-127; and yearly notations in the *Deseret News* and HBY, 1861-1867.

More exemplary, perhaps, but just as revealing, is a simpler list of “contributions which went into the building of the Logan Temple,” meant to illustrate “the extent of the barter economy involved”:

Labor	\$380,082
Wagons and teams	2,637
Farm produce	71,157
Livestock	29,472
Merchandise	30,231
Cash	<u>93,484</u>
Total	\$607,063 ³⁴

The presentation within Arrington’s narrative of such tables and charts marks a major departure from Brodie’s rhetorical gestures of irony. Rather than distancing the reader from the historiographical procedure, the presence of such tables—along with

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 341

footnoted clarifications and summaries of sources for compilation of figures—invite the reader to analyze and even to critique the historiographical methodologies employed. If such historiographical apparatuses are more “mathematical” than the literary narrative of Brodie’s biography, they are so less in the sense that they are more abstract or more liable to confuse the reader than in the sense that they invite the curious reader to attempt the proof herself or himself. Whereas Brodie’s goal is to distance herself both from the subject of her study and the reader to maintain an authoritative position, Arrington essentially invites the reader into the archives along with him.

Another historiographical apparatus used in important ways by Arrington but entirely overlooked by Brodie is the map. *No Man Knows My History* offered its readers only one (fold-out) map, inserted between the first two pages of the bibliography. Arrington, however, uses maps to carry his narrative forward, and with real effectiveness. Indeed, it may well be that Arrington used his maps *too* effectively, as Lowell “Ben” Bennion points out. Though *Great Basin Kingdom* is, as Bennion suggests in agreement with Donald Meinig, “an example of a ‘penetrating analysis of regional distinctiveness’” that pays careful attention to the close “relations between the related disciplines of geography and history,”³⁵ Arrington’s maps sometimes overstate his case. Because Arrington found himself, in the words of Gary Topping, “caught between the myth of Mormon settlement and its reality,” he utilized his maps as much as his narrative when “he readily adjusted his description of the terrain to suit” his needs in the moment.³⁶ All

³⁵ Lowell C. Bennion, “A Geographer’s Discovery of *Great Basin Kingdom*,” in “*Great Basin Kingdom*” *Revisited Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1991), 109-110.

³⁶ Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 72.

of this is to say that the inaccuracies of Arrington's maps are a manifestation of his having inherited the problematic notion of "the Mormon Village,"³⁷ a notion Topping dubs "one of the hoariest myths perpetuated by *Great Basin Kingdom*."³⁸

Such criticisms aside, then, Arrington's eight maps are useful for providing a broad orientation to key Mormon places and routes.³⁹ A perfect example is "Stations of the Brigham Young Express & Carrying Company, 1856-1857," a map showing not only the trail of the company from Independence, Missouri to Salt Lake City, but also locating and labeling some fourteen geographical features encountered along the trail.⁴⁰ But what really sets the use of this map off from, say, Brodie's relegation of her one map to the back matter of her book, is its visual imposition in the midst of the narrative Arrington has to tell. Breaking a paragraph (and a sentence within that paragraph) in two, the map is situated between typeset text above and typeset text below on the same page. Its interruption of the narrative flow invites attention to it, essentially asking the reader to become a researcher, matching up details in the written narrative with details on the visually presented map. Inasmuch as the map makes an archival trace of the actual landscape of the nineteenth-century American West, the emphasis is again on Arrington's invitation to his reader to join him in the archives.

But while these historiographical apparatuses internal to the text of the narrative itself invite the reader to join the archival adventure of the historian, it is in the bibliography and the endnotes that Arrington most emphatically makes his invitation.

³⁷ Bennion, "A Geographer's Discovery of *Great Basin Kingdom*," 131.

³⁸ Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington*, 85.

³⁹ Bennion, "A Geographer's Discovery of *Great Basin Kingdom*," 113.

⁴⁰ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 166.

Indeed, as Gary Topping says, “For many years one of the most valuable parts of [*Great Basin Kingdom*] was its elaborate documentation, which called attention to previously unknown sources and suggested promising paths for future research.”⁴¹

If the use of endnotes at first seems a bit less historiographically forthcoming than the use of footnotes, one need only glance at Arrington’s “bibliography-and-notes” to see that he had important reasons to relegate them to the back matter. It is first important to note that the bibliography and the notes are ultimately inseparable in *Great Basin Kingdom*. Though a six-page introduction to “manuscript collections,” “general works on Utah and the West,” and “general works on the Mormons” is separated off from the “Notes and References” and given the summary title “Bibliography,” these pages provide a model for how each chapter’s endnotes are presented. Each set of notes begins with a remarkably thorough bibliographical essay (often three pages in length) that points readers to the most relevant resources for study of the topic covered in the chapter. These essays could hardly have been presented in footnotes.

The six-page bibliography proper is itself a veritable guide to research in Mormon studies, rather than a documentation of Arrington’s sources. The “Manuscript Collections” subsection, for example, not only asserts that “the most extensive collection of manuscript and printed sources for the history of Utah, the Mormons, and the West is the Historian’s Office and Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah,” but provides a guide to the materials located there, which Arrington breaks down into six separable categories: (1) “The ‘History of Brigham Young,’” (2)

⁴¹ Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 70.

“The ‘Journal History of the Church,’” (3) “The journal histories of the stakes and missions of the church,” (4) “Original journals, account books, minute books, and other records of immigration and colonizing parties, of ecclesiastical organizations, and of associations, corporations, and other business enterprises,” (5) “Several hundred original diaries of Mormon pioneers and church officials,” and (6) “Miscellaneous collections of letters, . . . and near-complete collections of all Mormon (and anti-Mormon) books, periodicals, and newspapers.”⁴² He goes on in three further paragraphs to summarize the holdings of the Utah State Historical Society in Salt Lake City; the Salt Lake Public Library; the libraries of the University of Utah, Utah State University, and Brigham Young University; the Pioneer Memorial Building in Salt Lake City, maintained by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers; the Pioneer Village in Salt Lake City, maintained by the Sons of Utah Pioneers; the Huntington Library; the Bancroft collection; the Coe collection at Yale University; the National Archives in Washington, D.C.; the Library of Congress; Harvard’s Houghton Library; and the New York Public Library.⁴³ Wherever possible, he provides a reference to a finding aid or a bibliography. The same thoroughness is applied to the remainder of the bibliography.

As mentioned above, the notes for each chapter are introduced by a bibliographical essay. Exemplary is the essay for the first chapter’s notes, providing a wealth of reading material for the student of early Mormonism. Arrington recommends, in the course of three pages, 42 books, 10 theses and dissertations, 18 periodical articles,

⁴² Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 415.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 415-416.

and at least 2 specified manuscripts.⁴⁴ Arrington thus provides, in the three pages of the first of his thirteen chapter-specific bibliographical essays alone, more than half the total number of works listed in Fawn Brodie's entire bibliography (Brodie provides references to 134 pieces in her bibliography). Again, the very structure of the notes and the bibliographies points to Arrington's entrepreneurial desire to incite—rather than to bring to its conclusion—research into the history of Mormonism.

As for Arrington's endnotes, they can be classified into two categories. The endnotes of course serve the standard purpose of scholarly citation, referring to the original source from which Arrington draws in the narrative. The endnotes also serve the similarly standard but perhaps more "professional" purpose of providing extra information, details that might be distracting in the narrative itself but that deserve mention. In both cases, what seems to guide Arrington's decisions is a desire for thoroughness, as well as a hope that the reader will refer to the original sources. Evidence for the latter may be adduced from the fact that Arrington bothers to have explanatory notes at all when they are located in the back matter of the published book. The paragraph-length discussions that make up so much of the "Notes and References" invite the reader to spend serious time looking through the references and the referenced sources.

Everything in Arrington's use of historiographical apparatuses, then, is guided by his emphatic desire to encourage study in the archives. What can be said of his actual literary or narrative style? At the level of the sentence, Richard Etulain is quite right to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 421-423.

have said: “For the most part [Arrington’s] sentences march across his pages like the orderly field rows of the Arrington farmlands bordering the Snake River.”⁴⁵ Indeed, as Gary Topping points out, if *Great Basin Kingdom* escaped being “literarily dull,” it was only through “repeated revision.” As it is, Topping goes on to say, “its immense learning is couched in a clear, if matter-of-fact, prose that has sustained the interest of countless readers through its more than four hundred pages.”⁴⁶

But while Arrington’s style is, in the end, rather plodding, it serves a very specific literary purpose in *Great Basin Kingdom*, according to Etulain:

In regard to form, most chapters in Arrington’s masterpiece follow a familiar format. After introducing the thematic emphases of a chapter in a paragraph or two, he notes several trends, case studies, or specific occurrences that illustrate his underscored theme. The text of the thirty-to-forty-page chapters then takes up, one by one, illustrations supporting the themes of that section.⁴⁷

If this sounds like little more than a straightforward description of what it is to write well-documented history, the point is perhaps clear: Arrington’s style—or really, his lack of style—is part and parcel with his employment of historiographical apparatuses.

Everything he put into *Great Basin Kingdom* is meant at one and the same time (1) to put

⁴⁵ Richard W. Etulain, “Re-visioning the Mormons: *Great Basin Kingdom* as Historical Literature,” in *“Great Basin Kingdom” Revisited: Contemporary Perspectives*, 48.

⁴⁶ Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington*, 200. Topping further claims that Arrington’s “late books, after he had become Church Historian, are much better,” primarily because “he had acquired the editorial services of Rebecca Cornwall, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, and Lavina Fielding Anderson and had placed himself under the literary influence of Davis Bitton and Ronald W. Walker, two of the best writers ever to apply their skills to Mormon history.” *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 147-148.

⁴⁷ Etulain, “Re-visioning the Mormons,” 47.

forward an interpretation of nineteenth-century Mormonism and (2) to invite readers to challenge or even to overturn that interpretation. Never concerned to charm his readers with well-crafted prose, Arrington wanted, more than anything, to push a generation of historians toward the Church Archives.

The Preface

As with Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*, it is to the preface of Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* that one must turn to see how the father of the new Mormon history conceived of historiography when he wrote his first and greatest work.

In a spirit quite unlike that inhabiting Brodie's preface, Arrington opens his preface with two paragraphs of justification for the work. In part, this is obviously a consequence of the audience constructed by his publisher. Whereas Brodie, publishing with a popular, non-academic press could expect an audience for her study because of both its controversial approach and its controversial subject, Arrington had to worry that the long-standing refusal on the part of many or even most historians to take Mormonism or Mormon history seriously might cause his book's importance to be missed. He thus begins by pointing to the need in the late 1950s especially—"a time when government is exercising a potent influence in molding the economy of all of us, and when advanced countries are sending billions of dollars, and some of their finest experts, to underdeveloped areas to stimulate economic growth and expansion"⁴⁸—to investigate regional economic histories of any kind.

⁴⁸ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, vii

His argument on behalf of the study of the economic history of specifically the *Mormon* region of the Great Basin is, in the preface, essentially twofold:

[1] The present volume may be said to suggest the positive role which a government, whether secular or theocratic, if sufficiently strong, can play in the building of a commonwealth. [2] It also bears out the contention . . . that much can be learned by systematically observing the relationship between religion and economic life.⁴⁹

Uniting these two purposes, Arrington explains in his third paragraph:

Just as Mormonism often has been regarded as a typically American religion, so Mormon economic experience, to use the words of Thomas O’Dea, presents a distillation, a heightening, a more explicit formulation, and a summation of American experience generally.⁵⁰

Having satisfied himself as to the justifications for the work,⁵¹ Arrington devotes the remainder of his preface to questions of historiography. His first paragraph on the subject is without question the most important. His opening sentence announces his closeness to the archival record: “Although the findings of other scholars have not been

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Each of these two overarching justifications is further subdivided in Arrington’s preface. Concerning the role of government in economic endeavors: “(1) It illustrates the problems associated with the settlement and growth of an isolated, mountainous, and semi-arid region. (2) It dramatizes the strengths and weaknesses of attempting a comprehensive development program without outside capital.” Concerning the role of religion in economic history: “(3) It represents one of the few regional economies in modern history founded for a religious purpose, dominated by religious sentiments, and managed by religious leaders. (4) It offers an interesting case study of American pioneering experience generally.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vii-viii. The entire first chapter of Arrington’s dissertation—as well as of the earliest drafts of *Great Basin Kingdom*—had been devoted to the American-Mormon connection in Arrington’s dissertation. See Leonard J. Arrington, “Mormon Economic Policies and Their Implementation on the Western Frontier, 1847-1900” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1952), 1-29.

⁵¹ It should be noted that Arrington returns to his concerns that the study might be taken as a study merely of Mormon concern in a later paragraph.

neglected, every attempt has been made in this work to use primary materials.”⁵² He goes on to lament the limitations the project of producing a secondary source—rather than reproducing primary sources—necessarily imposed on his desire to bring the archival record to light: “The necessity of using only the material of interest to the economic historian, however, does a certain amount of injustice to the originals, which often are replete with descriptions of religious experiences, discussions of theology, and evidences to the writers of divine favor.”⁵³ And he then even apologizes for his incessant direct quotation of original sources: “Because of the relative inaccessibility of much of the source material, quotations are used more frequently than usual in a work of this kind.”⁵⁴

The remainder of the preface is given to a double defense of Arrington’s middle-of-the-road approach to religious history. Two paragraphs amount to a defense before the non-Mormon tribunal of the academic world, and one paragraph is still more explicitly a defense before the Mormon tribunal of the world of faith. Interestingly, similar to the way the last paragraph of Fawn Brodie’s preface to *No Man Knows My History* effectively provides a synopsis of Brodie’s own work, these last three paragraphs of Arrington’s preface to *Great Basin Kingdom* do much the same for Arrington’s work.

In order, in John-Charles Duffy’s words, to “transcend the pro- versus anti-Mormon polemics that had driven the writing of histories of Mormonism” before him,⁵⁵ Arrington had to draw attention to those polemics in a way that essentially diffused them.

⁵² Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, viii.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ John-Charles Duffy, “Faithful Scholarship. The Mainstreaming of Mormon Studies and the Politics of Insider Discourse” (master’s thesis, University of North Carolina, 2006), 33.

This is what he clearly attempts to do in these last paragraphs of the preface to *Great Basin Kingdom*. To non-Mormons, he says:

The writer's view is that ultimate truths are often, if not always, presented artistically or imaginatively in a way suited to the needs and exigencies of the living community of persons. While the Mormon story may not appeal to the rational faculty of the majority as an objective picture of the world about us, there can be no doubt that, somehow or other, it tapped immense creative forces in those believing it, and that it inspired a whole commonwealth of converts to make the desert blossom as the rose.⁵⁶

If this is little more than an apology to those who might feel nervous about Arrington's bringing Mormonism into academia, it is his apology to Mormons that would prove to be much more influential:

The true essence of God's revealed will, if such it be, cannot be apprehended without an understanding of the conditions surrounding the prophetic vision, and the symbolism and verbiage in which it is couched. . . . A naturalistic discussion of "the people and the times" and of the mind and experience of Latter-day prophets is therefore a perfectly valid aspect of religious history, and, indeed, makes more plausible the truths they attempted to convey.⁵⁷

Having made his defense before academia, Arrington attempts to bring his Mormon readers—academic or otherwise—onto the same historiographical plane.

⁵⁶ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, ix.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Recognizing in advance that many of his readers would belong to a people who had long been producing hagiography rather than history, and who had responded to Fawn Brodie's psychohistory with a flood of vitriolic responses, Arrington had to make a case for the importance of writing secular religious history. That he initially was successful seems clear enough: his defense in the shape of the preface to *Great Basin Kingdom* became a kind of manifesto for the subsequent new Mormon history. But even this argument would eventually come under criticism in several important ways.

However, it should be noted that Arrington's preface ties the attempt to find a middle ground for Mormon history to a program of promoting study of the definitive archival holdings at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City. If *Great Basin Kingdom* as a study of economic history is characterized by two separable trajectories—one regional and one religious⁵⁸—they are united by Arrington's apologetics on behalf of archival research on Mormon history. Arrington's preface, through its anticipatory words of consolation to both Mormon and non-Mormon readers, in effect knots together (1) the problematic of writing academically presentable religious history that would nonetheless be pleasing to the historiographically untrained believer with (2) the historian's incessant plea on behalf of the archival record.

Historiographical Impact

Noble as Arrington's effort to bring the average Mormon and the academic non-Mormon to the same historiographical plane must be said to have been, it eventually came under heavy fire, and from more than one perspective. The more heated of these

⁵⁸ I.e., the two justificatory theses laid out in the first paragraphs of the preface. Also, see *ibid.*, 136-137

critiques came with the dethronement of the new Mormon history in the early 1980s, during which new Mormon historians found themselves returning again and again, by way of defense, to Arrington's then-twenty-five-year-old preface to claim that it had indeed found a "middle ground." But far too much historiographical and especially philosophical water had passed under the bridge since 1958 for such appeals to have any real purchase.⁵⁹

But another important critique of what Arrington had accomplished with *Great Basin Kingdom* would come from historians less concerned about traditional or faithful Mormon history. Chief among these was Charles Peterson, who would point out thirty years after the publication of *Great Basin Kingdom*,

The 1958 appearance of Leonard J. Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* was perhaps the most important publication event in Mormon history. Yet at the end of a generation, the book's very success is associated with serious problems in Mormon historiography. . . . [Arrington and others like him in the broader history of American historiography] founded what may be called exceptionalist schools of history which in time isolated their followers,

⁵⁹ Charles Peterson argues that the way out of the dilemma is to recognize that Arrington's success in *Great Basin Kingdom* was less a question of his wedding the secular and the sacred than it was of his brilliant approach to regional history. Such a recognition would allow historians interested in the Mormon past to continue doing academic work without needing to focus so heavily on the holding of the Church Archives. Charles S. Peterson, "Beyond the Problems of Exceptionalist History," in *"Great Basin Kingdom" Revisited Contemporary Perspectives*, 147-151

leaving them outside mainstream studies, subject to various pressures, and without effective direction.⁶⁰

This “exceptionalist” model of Mormon history is one in which historians of Mormonism become specialists dealing with extremely narrow and focused problems—a major result being that Mormon historians write for and speak to only Mormon historians. In simpler terms, Peterson was pointing out that, like it or not, the new Mormon history, following Arrington’s model, inevitably becomes embroiled in a problematic of apologetics, whether for or against the inclusion of supernatural events in history.

That this problem cannot be separated from the last three paragraphs of Arrington’s preface to *Great Basin Kingdom* is made clear by its being used polemically by David Paulsen as recently as 2004 to suggest that the supernatural or transcendent deserves a place in the writing of Mormon history (in a statement that is ultimately quite at variance with the intentions of the new Mormon history itself):

The New Mormon History, characterized by a spirit of broad methodologies and nondogmatic investigation, has been [as in Arrington’s preface] and should remain [in fidelity to Arrington’s preface] open—indeed, sympathetic—to the possibility that divine revelation was an important or even the most important explanation of Mormon doctrines.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 133-134

⁶¹ David L. Paulsen, “The Search for Cultural Origins of Mormon Doctrine,” in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 52. If Paulsen points to Arrington’s preface in perpetuating the problem, Peterson points to it in an attempt to make clear that the preface is the *source* of the problem. Peterson, “Beyond the Problems of Exceptionalist History,” 143. Ronald Walker, David Whittaker, and James Allen in their definitive *Mormon History* also ground the historiography of the new Mormon history in the same preface, as does John-Charles Duffy. Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker,

It would seem, especially in light of the heated debates of the 1980s, that Arrington's "middle way" is less a genuine "best of both worlds" historiography than a staked out historiographical battlefield. Calling for a recognition of the complex dialectic between the religious and the secular, he seems to have embroiled historians of Mormonism in a Hegelian fight to the death for recognition.

If it was Arrington who, in the research, the writing, and the publication of a single path-breaking study, tied this Gordian knot—a Gordian knot that is essentially constitutive of the new Mormon history—he would have to wait for some Alexander-like historian to come along eventually to cut the knot without asking too many questions. While Peterson suggested that one way of doing so was to avoid the entire problematic of doing religious history in favor of doing regional history—something Arrington (along with Davis Bitton) himself acknowledged in *Mormons and Their Historians* in 1988⁶²—it would not be until Richard Bushman and Jan Shipps came along to propose a way of cutting the same Gordian knot while doing religious history.

Preliminary Conclusions

As with the preceding chapter on Fawn Brodie, all three of the stories told in this chapter are intertwined. The story of Arrington's adventures in the Church Archives can be disentangled neither from his subsequent arrangement of his several historiographical apparatuses in *Great Basin Kingdom*, nor from the explicit discussion in his preface to the same work about the place of the archives in historiography and the possibility of

and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 63-64. Duffy, "Faithful Scholarship," 36-37.

⁶² Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 159-163

creating a “middle ground” approach to religious history. Arrington’s history of Mormonism is the history of an archive overflowing with rich manuscript sources that can and should be accessed by careful, interested students of history.

One might suggest, then, that Arrington would have appreciated what Walter Benjamin called the “angel of history,” though he would undoubtedly have wanted to appropriate its overtly political message for his own campaign on behalf of the archives:

His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past.

Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.⁶³

At least in his burning desire to make the archival records of Mormonism available to everyone, Arrington was just such an angel of history—and he, like Benjamin’s angel, found himself and the movement he founded eventually blown helplessly away from a recurrently inaccessible archival collection that, because it was so frequently unavailable to the researcher, grew ever larger and more unexplored.

⁶³ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257-258.

Of course, it would not be entirely inappropriate to recognize the influence of Marx in Arrington's work. Many historians—especially economic historians—of Arrington's day were, as Shafer explains, “influenced by Marx's economic interpretation,” though “they usually refused to accept either his political programs or his monolithic class interpretation of history.”⁶⁴ There is little question, in fact, that it was Marx as the father of twentieth-century sociology who founded what would become social history's enduring love affair with the archival trace. In the very years Arrington was launching the new Mormon history, Louis Althusser was teaching his Paris students that Marx had indeed been the first thinker to raise history itself to the status of a (structurally independent) science.⁶⁵ Arrington was, so far as Marx is reflected in his historiographical methodology, very much representative of his times.⁶⁶

While it might, in the end, be too much to say that as Freud was to Brodie, Marx was to Arrington, it is nonetheless instructive to note such quasi-Marxist traits in Arrington's work. Whereas, in her concessions to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Brodie structured Joseph Smith as an unbalanced neurotic whose psyche could be probed only by those who knew how to read the symptoms, Arrington promoted quasi-universal perusal of archival holdings through a leveling of the ecclesiastical hierarchy that is

⁶⁴ Shafer, *Historical Study in the West*, 185.

⁶⁵ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 23-70.

⁶⁶ Relevant here is the *Annales* school of historiography, heavily influenced by Marx and arguably influential for Arrington. Particularly interesting is the *annaliste* style of geographical mythology that appears in *Great Basin Kingdom*. See Donald Worster, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Water,” in “*Great Basin Kingdom*” Revisited *Contemporary Perspectives*, 21-38. Though Arrington was at times considered to be somewhat leftist by overly concerned Church authorities who leaned quite far to the right—perhaps especially because so much of his writings had to do with communitarian practices—his lecture notes on Marx in his papers show that he was far from involved in anything like Marxist politics. Gary Topping briefly discusses Arrington's political leanings: Topping, *Leonard J Arrington*, 204

remarkably reminiscent of Marx's appeal to the proletariat's intellectual capacities. Where Brodie needed—like the analyst—to maintain some kind of structural distance from her subject and her readers, Arrington's pedestrian prose and openness about his research methods historiographically enacts an emancipatory or even revolutionary approach to the archives: Arrington wanted effectively to blur the distinction between the archival trace and the published work—in the sense that he wanted there to be, eventually, no wall between the stacks that make up the library and the boxes and folders that make up the archives.

Thus, while Brodie attempted historiographically to void the archives in *substance*, Arrington can be said to have attempted historiographically to void the archives in *structure*. Brodie needed the archive, as an archive, to exist, but in an inaccessible fashion, so that she could sustain her analytic project. Arrington, on the other hand, hoped that the archives could become fully open to the public, if not inseparable from the public record, so that he could continue to promote in his own professional way the emancipation of Mormon history, indeed, the emancipation of the Mormons who had disappeared into history. But, of course and again, further conclusions about the implications of Arrington's historiographical procedures for the changing status of the archive must be postponed until chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

MORMON CULTURAL HISTORY: JAN SHIPPS AND RICHARD BUSHMAN

What is without question the most important facet of the—especially methodological—collusion of the work of Shippo and Bushman in the 1980s is the fact that the two historians came to Mormon studies from so very distinct backgrounds. Bushman, an orthodox male Mormon who had been raised on the West Coast, had begun his academic life as a student at Harvard University before taking his first teaching position at Church-owned Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah; Shippo, a “pretty straight”¹ female Methodist who had been raised in the South, had begun her academic life as a student at Utah State University before taking a teaching position at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis. While Bushman early on manifested, as Shippo has claimed,² promise as a new Mormon historian, he initially made his mark instead in the very non-Mormon field of the history of the American Revolution; Shippo, however, has been exclusively a historian of Mormonism.

Oddly, though, these two drastically different tracks toward Mormon history nonetheless led Jan Shippo and Richard Bushman to the same place historiographically. At once together and separately, they forged a methodology that gave rise, over the course of perhaps two decades, to what can now confidently be called Mormon cultural studies. Importantly, through the intertwining of their remarkably similar projects, they seem to have produced a model of Mormon historiography that is not only genuinely

¹ Jan Shippo, “An ‘Inside-Outsider’ in Zion,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 150.

² Jan Shippo, “Richard Lyman Bushman, the Story of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, and the New Mormon History,” *Journal of American History* 94 (September 2007). 503-504.

novel, but also generic enough to be neither the product alone of the sympathetic “Gentile” nor the product alone of the “objective” Latter-day Saint. Mormon cultural history may well be the first *real* success at paving a historiographical road that finds a way between the Scylla of the secular historiography of Mormonism (embodied both in Brodie’s and Arrington’s models of Mormon history) and the Charybdis of the hagiography of Mormonism (that preceded both Brodie and Arrington and that has survived in a reactionary form since).

Jan Shipps found her way from undergraduate studies in Mormon history at Utah State University to the University of Colorado, where she continued her research in Mormon history, completing her dissertation, “The Mormons in Politics: The First Hundred Years,” in 1966 under Howard Lee Scamehorn. Moving from Colorado to Indiana, Shipps took a teaching position at IUPUI after a research stint at the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research. Though in the meanwhile she had abandoned Mormon studies for the most part, the classes she began to teach at IUPUI in religious history refocused her attention, and she began to study Mormon history more consistently.

Richard Bushman, on the other hand, received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard University, where he studied colonial American culture under Bernard Bailyn. After graduation, Bushman took an initial position at Brigham Young University, only to leave shortly thereafter to teach at Boston University, the University of Delaware, and Columbia University. From his earliest teaching years, Bushman was clearly interested in Mormon history, but he made little effort to write or publish in it until he was asked by Arrington to do so in the 1970s.

But whatever the pathways that led them to their interest in Mormon history, Bushman and Shipps found themselves at work on the history of Joseph Smith's early prophetic career precisely when the new Mormon history entered into its crisis in the early 1980s.

Research and Writing

Describing the researchers who made the Church Archives their haunt after Arrington's appointment as the official Church Historian in 1972, Jan Shipps explains:

The great majority of the historians who carried out research in the LDS Church Archives were Mormons, although some of them were no longer active in the church. But historians who were members of the RLDS Church or non-Mormon—then called gentiles—were also granted access to materials in the church's archives. (This author was one of those gentile historians.)³

Though both her self-description as “one of those gentile historians” and her use of parentheses in this passage would seem to place Jan Shipps at the fringe of the effort to write Mormon history, there is little question that she has actually been quite central to the field's progress since at least the 1980s.

Further along in the same piece, Shipps describes the process of discovery she went through while doing research in Arrington's wide-open archives after she decided (in the 1970s) to return from sex research to Mormon history:

³ *Ibid.*, 502.

In my perusal of the documents from the very beginnings of this movement, I discovered that I was virtually watching a new faith tradition come into being. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the great religions of the West, all came into existence at times when record keeping was rudimentary. As a result, their beginnings must be fleshed out from exceedingly fragmentary records. In the Mormon case, virtually all the records exist. My being allowed to see and handle them—somewhat like the witnesses to the *Book of Mormon* who said that they had “seen and hefted” the gold plates that bore the untranslated version of the sacred text—permitted me to see how religion works; how truth gets created; and how a faith tradition is passed from one generation to the next.⁴

Though she does not mention it in this passage, Shipps’s interpretation of Mormon history that developed as she worked in the archives became the central argument of her landmark 1985 book, *Mormonism. The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Indeed, as Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton tell the story (from their 1988 perspective), Shipps’s entire career funneled into that publication:

Early in her preparation for writing [her] dissertation, Shipps realized that she would have to come to grips with Joseph Smith. If Mormonism is a religion—something more than a political, social, economic, or anthropological phenomenon—one must deal with the founding Prophet. . . . [Shipps] went back to the narratives and documents of early Mormon

⁴ *Ibid*, 502-503.

history, particularly the six-volume documentary *History of the Church*.⁵ The more she studied, the more it seemed to her that Mormon history did not make sense if Joseph Smith was an imposter. . . . Having studied how religions develop, and having put Joseph Smith's career into a broad comparative context, Shipps came to a firm judgment that Joseph Smith was "an authentically religious man with legitimate claims to religious leadership." . . . Shipps spent extended periods of study in the LDS Church Archives and elsewhere in Utah, and she became acquainted with nearly all the leading LDS and RLDS historians. . . . Intensive study of nearly everything the Mormons wrote, and nearly everything written about them, and many years of observation of them in meetings, group discussions, and individual conversations led Jan eventually to posit that Mormonism was . . . a new religious tradition. . . . *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, published by the University of Illinois Press in 1985, elaborates that theme.⁶

Bringing out, in the midst of the crisis of Mormon historiography, first a number of articles on her developing interpretation of Mormonism's larger historical meaning and then a full book-length study, Jan Shipps found herself—especially because she was not a Latter-day Saint—in a rather strange position. In an attempt at the time to describe

⁵ Arrington and Bitton are a bit misleading when they describe the *History of the Church* as "documentary." They have reference here not to the Journal History of the Church, nor to some other archival documentary record, but the published six-volume *History of the Church* Brodie criticized so heavily in her preface.

⁶ Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 154-157.

what she called the position of an “inside-outsider,” she wrote of being caught between, on the one hand, “active, intense, serious, literal-minded Mormons” and, on the other hand, “active, intense, serious, literal-minded anti-Mormons.” As she put it:

Those at the super Mormon extreme expect that I'll sooner or later turn out to be a closet member of the Modern Microfilm set [a rabidly anti-Mormon group organized by Jerald and Sandra Tanner] or an ally of the Ex-Mormons for Jesus; while those at the opposite super anti-Mormon extreme are confident that I will fall over into the baptismal font any day now. That I could still be fascinated with the study of Mormonism after more than twenty years without either being an investigator preparing to join the Church or one planning to write an exposé of it, appears to be beyond the comprehension of those who fit into either of these two outermost Mormon categories.⁷

That she, as early as 1982—arguably as early as 1973⁸—had fulfilled the impossible aim of the new Mormon history to establish an “inside-outsider” position is a first sign that Jan Shipps had begun to do something essentially different from her predecessors. (One should note that Shipps draws an important distinction between her “inside-outsider” position and the relatively common “outside-insider” position of disaffected Mormons like Fawn Brodie and Sterling McMurrin.)⁹ But though Shipps had assumed the position

⁷ Shipps, “An ‘Inside-Outsider’ in Zion,” 142.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

of “inside-outsider” sometime between 1973 and 1982, it was not until her 1985 *Mormonism* that she secured it.

Richard Bushman implicitly pointed this out in his brief dust jacket blurb that appeared on the back of Shipps’s 1985 book. When he said, then, of Shipps’s study that it might be “the most brilliant book ever written on Mormonism,” one can assume that his approbation stemmed in large part from her having accomplished what he—along with most new Mormon historians—had been talking about in his Mormon publications for two decades: the possibility of writing Mormon history without falling onto one side or the other of the “conventional division of books on Mormonism into pro- and anti-.”¹⁰ His further description of the book as “insightful, inspiring, and original” might be read as his recommendation to everyone involved in the historiographical crisis that they learn from Jan Shipps about how to do Mormon history.

That Bushman’s praise was placed first on the jacket of the book is quite significant for a number of reasons. For one, it is important that his name and his laudatory acclaim for Shipps’s study were given pride of place over a number of other established scholars, ranging from new Mormon historian Klaus Hansen through the disaffected Mormon philosopher Sterling McMurrin to the renowned scholar of American religion Martin Marty. Of course, Bushman’s own works had been acclaimed for nearly two decades. But what is especially important is the fact that Bushman’s name appears along with the note that he was the author of *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of*

¹⁰ Richard L. Bushman, “The Future of Mormon History,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 23.

Mormonism, a study that, though it had only been published a year earlier, had already received wide acclaim.

The two publications—Shipps’s *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* and Bushman’s *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*—are complexly interrelated. Though they were officially published a year apart (Bushman’s study a year before Shipps’s), they refer to each other, Shipps to Bushman as a cited source, and Bushman to Shipps in an anticipatory review of sorts.¹¹ Moreover, each mentions the other in her or his acknowledgements, Shipps as providing Bushman with “expert help and insight on particular problems,”¹² and Bushman as having “read an early version of the entire manuscript” for Shipps.¹³ They had been, moreover, intertwined in 1984—the year Bushman’s book was published—by the organizers of that year’s annual Sunstone Symposium (a symposium dedicated to Mormon studies). In an attempt to stage a plenary session on Mark Hofmann’s then-recent “find” of the White Salamander letter, journalist and conference organizer Peggy Fletcher asked Bushman (as author of *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*), Shipps (as the author of the then-imminent *Mormonism*), and Valeen Tippetts Avery (as the author of the then-recently published *Emma Hale Smith: Mormon Enigma*, a biography of Joseph Smith’s wife) to make presentations outlining new information about Joseph Smith and Mormon origins

¹¹ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 178, Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 192. Note that Bushman describes Shipps as “break[ing] the deadlock between believers and skeptics” and “offer[ing] a perspective on Mormon beginnings that may provide a meeting ground for those Mormon and non-Mormon scholars who are willing to accept her broad view of world religion and world culture.”

¹² Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 1

¹³ Shipps, *Mormonism*, xvi.

they had discovered in the process of writing their books.¹⁴ As a result, the three scholars ended up participating in a session that made the first *public* allusion to the White Salamander letter.¹⁵ Three years later, on August 6, 1987, Bushman and Shippo (but not Avery) were asked to participate together again in a public discussion of Hofmann's "finds," this time after Hofmann himself had been "found out." Importantly, this occasion was "a one-day *church-sponsored* public conference" held at BYU. Shippo and Bushman were to "attend the conference, listen to the proceedings, and, at the end of the day, present [their] assessments of any enduring impact Hofmann's plagiarism might have on how the story of Mormon beginnings would be told in the future."¹⁶

It is almost tempting to see Fate or Providence bringing the work of Shippo and Bushman together in the 1980s, though of course all the above-described intertwinings between them might be attributed to the relative insularity of the world of Mormon studies at the time. Of course, though it might be the most level-headed approach to say that nothing intentionally collaborative between Shippo and Bushman was at work in the 1980s, the exchange between Shippo and Bushman in 2007 in the *Journal of American History* discussed in the introduction to this thesis finds the scholars themselves wondering more recently about what had begun to happen in 1984 and 1985. In essence, Shippo's contribution to the exchange is an extended reflection on the significance less of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Bushman's 2005 biography) than of *Joseph Smith*

¹⁴ Jan Shippo, *Sojourner in the Promised Land Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Bushman's 1984 study).¹⁷ Bushman's contribution to the 2007 discussion in turn opens with a return to his dust jacket comment of 1985: Shipps's "*Mormonism* broke new ground in the conceptualization of the Mormon past. I meant it when I said for the dust jacket: 'This may be the most brilliant book ever written on Mormonism.'"¹⁸ While they did not see it happening when they lived through it in the 1980s, Bushman and Shipps seem now to be seeing something as having happened then.

Of course, something still remains to be said of the research that led Bushman from his position as an authority on Colonial and Revolutionary American history to his position as a co-founder with Jan Shipps in the 1980s of a new model of Mormon historiography. What brought Bushman into Mormon studies?

According to Bushman, it was less a "what" than a "who" that initiated his contact with Mormon studies: "Leonard [Arrington] drew me into Mormon studies by proposing that I write the first volume of the projected sixteen-volume history of the Church."¹⁹ Bushman here has reference to one of the eventually abandoned projects of Arrington's Historical Department. Walker, Whittaker, and Allen explain: "Arrington and his superior at church headquarters, Alvin R. Dyer, set high goals for the History Division The program included publishing a sixteen-volume history of the church that would mark Mormonism's 150-year anniversary in 1980."²⁰ When Arrington's historical department began to face opposition from the Church hierarchy in the late

¹⁷ Shipps, "Richard Lyman Bushman," 498-516.

¹⁸ Richard L. Bushman, "What's New in Mormon History?" *Journal of American History* 94 (September 2007): 517.

¹⁹ Richard L. Bushman, "Making Space for the Mormons," in *Believing History Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 173.

²⁰ Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 65.

1970s, “the division’s most ambitious project, the multivolume sesquicentennial series, was dropped,” though the assigned authors would be free “to seek their own publishers” and so avoid Church-owned “Deseret Book’s tight editorial policy.”²¹

Though the Church ultimately dropped the massive project, Bushman benefited from Arrington’s early selection of him for the writing of the first volume. As he later explained, “Leonard persuaded me to take on the assignment and made it easy to work from Boston by sending photocopies of key documents.”²² The research and writing that Bushman put into contribution to the sesquicentennial project did not go to waste: he published the work, not with the originally contracted Deseret Book, but instead with the University of Illinois in 1984 as *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*.

Having, like Shipps, done the bulk of his work during the “Arrington spring,” Bushman not only had free access to the necessary archival materials stored in Salt Lake City, but he was able to take advantage of the efforts at modernization and classification that the archival staff had only undertaken two decades after Arrington had begun his research for *Great Basin Kingdom*. The turning point in the “professionalization” of the Church Archives, it should be mentioned, was apparently 1963, when archivist Earl Olsen was first encouraged to join national archivist and librarian organizations. This was followed in the late 1960s by the first attempts to classify the materials in both the library and the archive. Serious work on systematization, however, did not begin until 1972 when Arrington was appointed as Church historian with the charge to “mak[e] this

²¹ Gary Topping, *Leonard J. Arrington: A Historian’s Life* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008), 123-124.

²² Bushman, “Making Space for the Mormons,” 175.

preservation archive a working archive.” It was thus Arrington and his colleagues who wrote the first registers and research guides, and who did the difficult work of classifying documents that had not been pulled from boxes since the nineteenth century.²³

Incidentally, the process Bushman employed in doing research changed drastically when he began work on what would become his 2005 biography, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. As he explains in the preface to that work, after Ronald Esplin asked him in 1994 to write the biography, Bushman made the

suggestion that the [Joseph Fielding] Smith Institute [at BYU] sponsor a summer seminar on Joseph Smith for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. Beginning in 1997, a half dozen students from all over the country met in Provo, Utah, for two months of research into the cultural context of Joseph Smith’s life and thought.²⁴

Employing new summer fellows each year, Bushman essentially had commanded a team of nearly fifty research assistants by the time *Joseph Smith. Rough Stone Rolling* was published, all singularly dedicated to unearthing material to flesh out Bushman’s biography. If the program was, as Bushman says, “the most pleasurable experience of [his] academic life,”²⁵ it was also a major boon to his research.²⁶

²³ Leonard J. Arrington, “Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1977): 194; Leonard J. Arrington, “The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 60. See also Peggy Fletcher, “Church Historian: Evolution of a Calling,” *Sunstone* 10 (1985): 46-48.

²⁴ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxii-xxiii.
²⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

²⁶ Incidentally, this has led to the possibility of attributing failings in Bushman’s 2005 biography to his assistants. See, for instance, Marvin S. Hill, “By Any Standard, a Remarkable Book,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 160.

Such resources, of course, are the result of Bushman's ascendancy after *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, certainly not something he had at his command when he was researching his earlier study. Nonetheless, both he and Shipps benefited in obvious ways from a number of professional organizations to which neither Fawn Brodie nor Leonard Arrington had access. Not only could both Shipps and Bushman count on the ecstatic support of Leonard Arrington and his Historical Division, but they could—and did—swap ideas and research with other scholars specializing in Mormon studies through meetings at the Mormon History Association and the Sunstone Symposium. Arrington's entrepreneurial approach to the movement he created had resulted in a community of scholars talking about Mormonism, and Shipps and Bushman were both at the “rump sessions at professional history meetings where ‘Brighamites’ [Utah Mormons] and ‘Josephites’ [Missouri Mormons] sat on beds and floors in cramped hotel rooms and talked together into the small hours of the night.”²⁷

Of course, everyone in Mormon history in the 1970s benefited both from Arrington's open-door policy at the Church Archives and the developed camaraderie of the Mormon intellectual community, but Bushman and Shipps were producing something distinct from others. What distinguished their methodology from those before or apart from them was less a question of archival access or professional collaboration than it was of the perspective with which they perused the materials, their way of making sense of those materials, and the construction of the narratives in which they would eventually present their conclusions. In essence, the emphasis in Mormon historiography had

²⁷ Shipps, “An ‘Inside-Outsider’ in Zion,” 153.

shifted for them from the importance of the archival trace to the importance of the interpretive and narrative approach to the manuscripts. The documentary record had been displaced from its privileged position by the hermeneutical operation. And this hermeneutical operation seems to have been determined by the “inside-outsider” position that could only be attained by one who had first been in an “outside looking in” position.²⁸ (Jan Shipps had, as a non-Mormon, obviously begun her work in Mormon studies as an outsider looking in. But it is arguable that Richard Bushman wrote from a similar position, especially given his long immersion in Colonial American history, all undertaken without an eye to Mormon history—or even history of the American West—at all.)

The odd result is that, whereas Brodie and Arrington have fascinating archival adventure stories to tell, there is, in the end, no such fascinating tale to tell about how Shipps and Bushman gained and lost access to the documentary record. The adventure story, for them, is rather the story of their shifting interpretations and modulating ideas as they perused the archival record alongside others, a record to which they gained access more or less like one might approach the stacks in a public library.

The Books

Jan Shipps’s *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* is a fascinating work of cultural history. Rather than attempting to prove the occurrence or non-occurrence of the founding events of the Mormon story, Shipps focuses her efforts on trying to understand how belief in and fidelity to those events (or non-events) gave shape

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

to the genuinely new religious tradition of Mormonism. More precisely, she takes as her particular aim in the study to suggest that Mormonism, as a religious tradition *born in the age of archiving and record keeping*, can provide the phenomenologist of religion with the materials for thinking carefully about how religious traditions in general are born. Suggesting, then, that Mormonism is to Christianity as Christianity is to Judaism, Shipps argues that the shape of the first two centuries of Christian history can be found in the shape of Mormon history from the 1820s to the end of the twentieth century.

The result is cultural history. Jan Shipps neither falls into the psychological trap of creating a biography of the “dead white European male” (Joseph Smith) nor gives way to the sociological trap of creating a statistical history that silences the voices of the people she is studying. Avoiding, that is, both Brodie’s and Arrington’s historiographical models, Shipps produces a study of Mormonism that breaks with earlier histories through its profoundly hermeneutical, at times almost art critical, focus.

Richard Bushman’s *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* is, as cultural history, perhaps a bit more complex than Shipps’s *Mormonism*. This is primarily because it is, at least in appearance, a biography. However, while it takes Joseph Smith as its central character, it is hardly limited to the kind of biographical focus of, say, Brodie’s book. Bushman is never concerned with “getting inside the head” of the prophet. Rather, his primary intention was to establish the complex relationships among a number of purported events by paying careful attention to the broader cultural contexts in which the events supposedly took place. However, unlike Shipps’s study, Bushman’s focus is limited only to the three generations *preceding* the official organization of the

Church in 1830, allowing him to analyze the cultural beginnings, rather than the eventual consequences, of Mormonism.

But while Bushman's 1984 study of Joseph Smith is thus less sweeping in aim than Shipps's 1985 *Mormonism*, it is no less a product of cultural history. In the name of tracing the complex interrelations between the broader culture of antebellum America and the more limited culture that was taking shape under the name of Mormonism during the same period, Bushman takes up a hermeneutical methodology not unlike Shipps's. And it was by axiomatically assuming the occurrence of the founding events of Mormonism—not because his readers would agree that they had happened, but in order to come closest to identifying with the cultural outlook of the earliest Mormons—that Bushman broke in the sharpest manner with historians of Mormonism writing before him. Utilizing rigor and the perspective of the cultural historian, Bushman keeps his distance from traditional Mormon hagiography, even as he treats the sacred events of Mormonism as having actually happened.

Historiographical Apparatuses

If, as can be gathered from the stories of research and writing above, Shipps and Bushman essentially find themselves without Brodie- or Arrington-like archival adventures to tell, their intertwined publications similarly find themselves without Brodie- or Arrington-like historiographical apparatuses to analyze. Indeed, what perhaps deserves the most attention is the relative *lack* of historiographical apparatuses in both Shipps's *Mormonism* and Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*. When set side by side, as much with Brodie's relatively non-academic *No Man Knows*

My History as with Arrington's emphatically academic *Great Basin Kingdom*, these latter two studies seem historiographically Spartan. Both Shipps and Bushman, of course, employ endnotes. And Shipps provides a separable bibliography, while Bushman does not. But none of this is surprising or other than standard by the mid-1980s—whether in Mormon studies or elsewhere—nor is any of it significantly distinct from what Brodie and Arrington had done.

The relative absence of historiographical apparatuses in Shipps's and Bushman's books, however, is not complete. At least one historiographical apparatus is employed in each book in a way that differs from what had been done in either Brodie's or Arrington's works. In Shipps, it is the use of photographs; in Bushman, it is a "Note on Sources and Authorities." These will be considered in turn.

Photographs are utilized in both Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* and Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom*, but in both cases the pictures appear as relatively separate from the text. They are found as plates on unnumbered pages and, except in one instance in Brodie's book, do not enter into the narrative in any significant way.²⁹ The photographs in both Brodie's and Arrington's publications are, one might say, "mere" illustrations. The same cannot be said, however, of the photographs that appear in Shipps's *Mormonism*. The most productively employed photographs in *Mormonism* are

²⁹ Newell Bringhurst describes Brodie's "stumble[ing] onto an unexpected surprise. While working at the Library of Congress on some final details, she came across a photograph of Oliver Buell, the son of Prescindia Huntington Buell, one of Joseph Smith's plural wives. Examining this photograph closely, Brodie was convinced that Buell was the son of the Mormon leader, so similar was he in appearance to Smith. With a bit of wry humor, she told [Dale] Morgan, 'if Oliver Buell isn't a Smith then I'm no Brimhall.' She ultimately included the photograph of Buell in the biography alongside a photograph of Emma and Joseph Smith's four sons." Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 96-97. Importantly, though, Brodie never connects Buell to the picture in the actual narrative of the book. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 301-302, 345.

the two that introduce chapter 4, “Reformation and Restoration.”³⁰ The chapter itself deals with the distinction between the Utah and Missouri branches of Mormonism, between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.³¹ The conclusion she draws by the end of the chapter is relatively straightforward: Mormonism is to Christianity as Christianity is to Judaism. In order to secure her point, Shipps draws on the 1860 “reorganization” of the Church in Missouri. She argues that the Reorganized Church is a strand of Mormonism that refused to make the complete break with Christianity necessary to bring about the rise of a “new religious tradition.” As she explains:

Eyes and ears alert to the tensions in Mormon restorationism can, however, see and hear in RLDS [Reorganized LDS] conferences a restored Church of Jesus Christ that has a figurative connection with Israel, rather than—as is the case when observing a televised general conference from the LDS tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City—seeing and hearing of a restoration of Israel that has a direct connection with the Church of Jesus Christ.³²

Thus, for Shipps, the Reorganized Church serves as a kind of foil that allows her to set the Utah Church off as a genuinely “new religious tradition.”

The two pictures positioned at the beginning of the chapter are no “mere” illustration of the argument. They are, in essence, a part of the argument. Positioned one

³⁰ The photographs are on page 66; chapter 4 begins on the opposing page 67. Shipps, *Mormonism*, 66-67.

³¹ The latter church has since changed its official name to The Community of Christ.

³² *Ibid*, 85.

above the other, the two photographs show “The LDS temple, Logan, Utah, 1887” and “The RLDS auditorium, Independence, Mo.” The first of these is a veritable fortress in its “battlement-clad” neo-Gothic style, structured to evoke, as Terryl Givens suggests, both “defiance and physical permanence.”³³ The second, however, looks like any modern auditorium with office-like windows on the wings, a large glass façade, and a circular dome for a crown. The stark contrast between the two buildings marks the distance between the two Mormon movements.

The employment of such pictures for more than mere illustrative purposes marks a major leap. If their use is historiographical, it is so only because Shipps would seem to have crossed the boundary into cultural history. They are not read off as providing facts, nor are they the source of historical data. Rather, they are interpreted culturally, taken as artifacts that suggest something about the contours and social meaning of an entire tradition. While one undoubtedly needs a thorough acquaintance with the archival record even to make the kinds of arguments Shipps is making on the whole, it is not access to the archives that allows her to see the significance of two juxtaposed photographs. Her insight derives from hermeneutical rigor much more than it derives from archival thoroughness.

Much more traditionally historiographical, it would seem, is Bushman’s “Note on Sources and Authorities.” Similar, in some ways, to Arrington’s “Bibliography,” it provides the reader with a starting place for doing work in Mormon studies. However, a quick perusal of its four pages reveals that much has changed since Arrington’s *Great*

³³ Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111

Basin Kingdom. Rather than using this bibliographical essay of sorts to point his readers to the archives themselves—which had, of course, been virtually closed by the time *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* was published—Bushman uses it to direct the interested reader to *published* pieces in which “the [archival] sources have [already] been assembled and analyzed.”³⁴ Moreover, whenever he makes reference to a manuscript source, his warning that it is located in the Church Archives is relegated to an endnote. An example: “[Joseph] Knight’s son Joseph also recorded a much briefer collection of incidents from the early period”; the endnote nearly sixty pages later gives the reference: “Joseph Knight, Jr., ‘Joseph Knight’s Incidents,’ manuscript, Church Archives.”³⁵

In the end, then, Bushman’s “Note on Sources and Authorities” is a short essay on the history, rather than on the sources, of Mormon studies. And somewhat surprisingly, this history of Mormon studies describes the discipline as having had its dawn as early as the beginnings of Mormonism! Exemplary is his comment on the effect of one of the earliest anti-Mormon works, published in 1834: “The Howe-Hurlbut volume effectively stopped the development of Mormon studies by providing an explanation of Joseph Smith and the *Book of Mormon* so in keeping with nineteenth-century prejudices that no further investigation was required.”³⁶ Still more interesting in Bushman’s “Note” is the placement of Jan Shipps’s then-still-unpublished *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* in the stream of Mormon studies. Because, for Bushman, Mormon

³⁴ Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 189.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 190, 246.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

studies had its abortive start in the 1830s, everything in its problematic history moved inexorably toward the “most imaginative innovation” of Jan Shipps’s then-upcoming study, which “breaks the deadlock between believers and skeptics.”³⁷

Thus, what might at first appear to be a historiographical apparatus in the mold of the new Mormon history as Arrington practiced turns out actually to be an essay arguing that Mormon studies was on hold from 1834 until 1985, when Shipps’s *Mormonism* would reopen serious investigation of Mormon origins. Significantly, the essay of sorts itself attempts to imitate Shipps’s approach by focusing less on the archival record than on attempting to interpret the field of Mormon studies. Like Shipps, Bushman here takes as his task essentially to make sense of what had been brought forward by the new Mormon history, rather than to try to beat them at their own game.

In the last analysis, then, what seems to characterize both Shipps’s and Bushman’s spare use of traditional historiographical apparatuses is an insistence on making sense of what Mormon studies has or has not achieved. The emphasis switches from scrutiny of the archival record to scrutiny of analyses of the archival record. Less interested than Brodie in maintaining a kind of authorial distance sustained by irony, and less interested than Arrington in breaking down the walls of the archives so as to involve everyone in the work of discovering the documentary record, Bushman and Shipps commence a program of frank and, frankly, subjective reflection on Mormon studies itself. Hence, their literary style: both Shipps and Bushman offer their interpretations as, preeminently, *theirs*, precisely by taking up *as subjective* the interpretations of the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

various students of Mormon history. Whereas Bushman primarily restricted this to his introduction and his “Note on Sources and Authorities,” Shipps employs it throughout her book, a perfect example of which can be drawn from the chapter of her book discussed above:

The Mormon practice of keeping elaborate records started so early that the recovery of the general nature of this early group has been possible. The dissertations of Mario DePillis, Marvin Hill, and Gordon Pollock together make it very clear that in the beginning, new Mormons were responding to signs of authenticity similar to those which led converts into other less radical restoration movements.³⁸

Rather than inviting their readers to take them as authorities (Brodie’s method), and rather than inviting their readers to get to work in the archives (Arrington’s method), Bushman and Shipps implicitly invite their readers to join the Mormon intellectual community—primarily by *assuming* in their writings that such a community exists, but also by laying out the contours of the discussion for their readers. They would appear—perhaps Bushman more than Shipps—to take up the entrepreneurial responsibility Arrington had assumed in the 1960s and 1970s, but not with the task of building up a coterie of Mormon cultural historians rather than of Mormon social historians. At any rate, this was something Bushman signaled to me personally when he responded to an

³⁸ Shipps, *Mormonism*, 78.

unsolicited e-mail to him that I had opened with “Dear Professor Bushman” by beginning with “My dear Brother Spencer.”³⁹

The Prefaces/Introductions

In continuity with all that has been said above, Bushman opens his introduction to *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* with a brief history of his changing attitude toward the sources:

In the first stages of composition this book was titled “The Origins of Mormonism.” The word “Origins” was dropped when the actual complexities of identifying the sources of Mormon belief and experience bared themselves. An attempt to trace all the images, ideas, language, and emotional structure of a movement as elaborate as Mormonism became more evidently elusive and futile as the work went on. The word “Beginnings” in the title signifies a more modest purpose: to narrate what happened as Mormonism came into being in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁰

Strictly speaking, this paragraph describes more than just Bushman’s changing perception of the archival record itself. It describes Bushman’s gradual recognition that it was not the archival record itself that needed interpretation. What he here gives pride of place is essentially his dawning recognition that an “attempt to trace all the images, ideas, language, and emotional structure” of Mormonism—an attempt to write a definitive piece in the mode of the new Mormon history—would ultimately be both “elusive and futile.”

³⁹ Richard Bushman, e-mail message to author, December 2007.

⁴⁰ Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 3.

But this first confession only leads to a second, in which Bushman places before his readers a model of historiography that at least Klaus Hansen (as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis) instantly recognized as distinct from its predecessors in Mormon history:

The problem of Joseph Smith's visions complicates even this simplified undertaking. Believing Mormons like myself understand the origins of the *Book of Mormon* quite differently from others. How can a description of Joseph Smith's revelations accommodate a Mormon's perception of events and still make sense to a general audience? My method has been to relate events as the participants themselves experienced them, using their own words where possible. Insofar as the revelations were a reality to them, I have treated them as real in this narrative. General readers will surely be left with questions about the meaning of these experiences, but at least they will have an understanding of how early Mormons perceived the world.⁴¹

The importance of this paragraph for the world of Mormon historiography cannot be overstated.

Though Bushman claims that the question of faith "complicates" what he describes as the "simplified" approach laid out in his first paragraph, critics have essentially claimed the opposite: Bushman's decision to write as a confessedly believing Latter-day Saint made his job easier, rather than more difficult, since he knew in advance

⁴¹ *Ibid*

how each event would turn out, namely, as evidence of Joseph Smith's divine calling. However, because Bushman aimed to tell the *cultural* story of Joseph Smith, he was not exempt from carefully addressing the thorny questions of Mormonism's origins. As Marvin Hill said in one of the earliest reviews of the book,

From the standpoint of the Church it may be the most important book of our time, for it boldly attempts to introduce new sources with their implicit challenges to faith in a way that can educate Latter-day Saints and not alienate. . . . If the Mormon sense of history and historical development is going to survive in our time amidst the very great challenge that many of the new sources pose for traditional perspectives, it will no doubt be done along the lines that Bushman has set forth.⁴²

Bushman thus describes a new methodology that is characterized by two commitments. First, it is characterized by a recognition that Mormon studies has come of age, and that it is time to look as much at what scholars of Mormon history have said as at what the archival record itself has to say. Second, it is characterized by an essential agreement with Boyd K. Packer's claim that "There is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the Church without consideration of the spiritual powers that attend

⁴² Marvin S. Hill, "Richard L. Bushman—Scholar and Apologist," *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984). 132-133. It is interesting that, as Roger Launius points out elsewhere, Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* was "one of the few books along with the scriptures which the Mormon Church placed in thousands of media kits and public libraries in the United States and abroad as part of a public relations effort related to the 1997 sesquicentennial of the trek across the plains and the Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City in 2002." Roger D. Launius, "Mormon Origins: The Church in New York and Ohio," in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, ed. Newell G. Bringham and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 54. The double mention of "new sources" in the quotation from Hill should not be taken as evidence against the primary *cultural* orientation of Bushman's historiography. These "new sources" were being discussed in a number of historical studies, but Bushman's biography of Joseph Smith was the first confessedly *Mormon* attempt to deal with them—hence, *new* sources.

this work.”⁴³ Though Bushman, in speaking to those outside of Mormon (Packer was speaking to Church educators), would likely emend that quotation slightly to say “There is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the Church without consideration of the fact that believers firmly believe that spiritual powers attend Mormonism,” there is an obvious continuity between Packer’s ecclesiastic assertion and Bushman’s historiographical approach.

The result, then, is indeed a rather complex affair. One must be as attentive to and honest about the archival resources as the new Mormon historians who had by 1984 fallen out of favor with the Church’s hierarchy; one must be culturally and interpretively attentive to the nuances and implications of the many (and always growing) publications in the field of Mormon studies itself; and one must be constantly attuned to the fact that believing Mormons, whether dupes or not, have major stakes in their history. The result, in the end, is an approach to Mormon history that is, as Richard Bushman had long hoped, celebrated both by outsiders and insiders to the Mormon faith,⁴⁴ but at the same time and to Richard Bushman’s expressed dismay,⁴⁵ also dismissed by both believers and non-believers.

⁴³ Packer, “The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect,” 244. Note that Bushman “sought a [ritual, not merely symbolic] blessing from Elder Packer before getting started” on *Joseph Smith Rough Stone Rolling*. Richard L. Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith An Author’s Diary* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books), 32.

⁴⁴ Note that Shipp’s similar approach has earned her the odd status of having received, without being a member of the Mormon Church, a kind of official “calling”: “At the request of the general authorities of the LDS Church,” Shipp was given exclusive access to long since inaccessible journals of early apostle William E. McLellin, which she was to assess for them. The result was the eventual publication of the journals: Jan Shipp and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin 1831-1836* (Provo, UT, and Urbana and Chicago: BYU Studies Press and University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁴⁵ Bushman wrestles with the criticisms both from within and without in Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith*.

Shipp, in her preface, speaks of the same complex affair with its triple contract: “Although I was trained to write history, this book reflects the fact that I have been teaching religious studies as well as history for the past decade. It is filled with historical data, but because Mormon history itself is treated as text and subjected to interpretive analysis, it is as hermeneutical as it is historical.”⁴⁶ The historical “half” of this enterprise, she explains further along, is a contract split between “research into specific aspects of the Mormon past and countless extended conversations with Mormons about Mormonism.”⁴⁷ This triple contract led to her having made

an earnest effort to avoid distancing my interpretation from LDS historical data: I searched out direct quotations that expressed ubiquitous ideas and used them in the presentation; I paraphrased perceptions in words that might have been used by nineteenth-century Mormons themselves; and, as far as possible, tried to establish contexts that would have been recognizable to the Latter-day Saints who lived in the times and places in question.⁴⁸

If this leads inevitably, as Shipp confesses, to an “argument [that] appear[s] somewhat apologetic at times,” she hopes (especially as a non-Mormon) that this result can be overlooked in that it allows her to reconstruct “the picture of early Mormonism *as perceived from the inside*” (the italics are hers).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Shipp, *Mormonism*, x Note that further along, she splits the “historical” contract in two.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

The connection between Shipps's stated methodology and Bushman's was not lost on readers. In a review that appeared a full year before Shipps's *Mormonism* was published, Klaus Hansen described the "methodology"—which he regarded as having made "a quantum leap in our understanding of Mormon history"—as being "applied by both Shipps and Bushman."⁵⁰

Historiographical Impact

If Brodie and Arrington have their historiographical critics, so do Bushman and Shipps. John-Charles Duffy, in a series of articles, has criticized Bushman particularly for having "take[n] advantage of the postmodern moment."⁵¹ Duffy associates Bushman directly with the whole coterie of Mormon intellectuals who emerged in the early 1980s in a philosophical attack on the methodologies of the new Mormon historians, as well as with apologists and religious educators who make up an identifiably conservative Mormon intelligentsia. The primary difficulty with Duffy's criticisms of and arguments regarding Bushman, however, is that they fail to recognize the profound similarities between Bushman's and Shipps's historiographical procedures as well as the profound distinctions between their collective approach to Mormon history and Arrington's earlier

⁵⁰ Klaus J. Hansen, "Jan Shipps and the Mormon Tradition," *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 136-137. Note Hansen's later clarification that this quantum leap is less the invention of a new approach than the appropriation of an approach that was being used in religious studies in general by the 1980s. Klaus J. Hansen, "Mormon History and the Conundrum of Culture," in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, 22-23.

⁵¹ Bushman uses this phrase to describe his essay, "The Social Dimensions of Rationality." Duffy applies it to Bushman's work more generally, though he misquotes Bushman slightly as having taken "advantage of the postmodern *movemen*" (rather than "moment"). Bushman, *Believing History*, 37; John-Charles Duffy, "Faithful Scholarship: The Mainstreaming of Mormon Studies and the Politics of Insider Discourse" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 2006), 115

new Mormon historical approach.⁵² In the end, Duffy's critiques are essentially *political* rather than *philosophical* or *historiographical*.⁵³

In the end, however, there may be reason to suggest that the practitioners of Mormon cultural history, rather than its critics, will be—or have already become—the ones who point out its essential weakness. By shifting emphasis from the archives themselves to the work of hermeneutics and cultural criticism, cultural historians of Mormonism have incorporated the essential weakness of the historiographical enterprise itself into their methodology. Rather than attempting to create something structurally immune from criticism through an absolute appeal to objectivity—whether by means of a literary irony that constructs a pretended unquestionable authority or by means of a

⁵² Duffy tends, following those he most heavily criticizes (Louis Midgley, David Bohn, and Neal Kramer), to associate Shipps methodologically with Arrington and Thomas Alexander, splitting her work off from that of Bushman. But not only does Duffy fail to address the actual historiographical procedures that distinguish and unite the several historians he discusses, there is something disingenuous about his vacillating treatment of Bushman. Early in his articles and his thesis—all of which follow the same basic argument—he distinguishes Bushman from the new Mormon history and associates him with Mormon apologetics by taking up a discussion of his call for a believing history. Later, however, in order to make the suggestion that Bushman is coming full circle to promote a kind of return to the new Mormon history, Duffy highlights Bushman's desire to write history that can be appreciated as much inside as outside the Church. What Duffy seems not to realize is: (1) the profound similarities between Shipps's and Bushman's historiographical methodologies; (2) the profound distinction between the methodology employed by Shipps and Bushman and that employed by Arrington and the new Mormon historians; (3) the fact that while Arrington spoke of trying to write history that would please both insiders and outsiders, he ultimately wrote and promoted history that pleased outsiders much more than it pleased insiders, while Bushman and Shipps have written history that has been much more acceptable inside while still being regarded outside as viable history; and (4) the fact that critics such as Midgley who early attacked Shipps as being part of the new Mormon history have in recent years changed positions drastically on the historiographical status of her work. See Duffy, "Faithful Scholarship"; John-Charles Duffy, "Can Deconstruction Save the Day? 'Faithful Scholarship' and the Uses of Postmodernism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-33; and John-Charles Duffy, "Faithful Scholarship and the Mainstreaming of Mormon Studies," an unpublished paper presented at the 2006 Sunstone Symposium. For a representative early attack against Shipps by Midgley, which amounts actually to a long complaint about Shipps's having said something nice about John Brooke's *The Refiner's Fire*, see Louis Midgley, "The Shipps Odyssey in Retrospect," *FARMS Review* 7, no. 2 (1995): 219-52. For an example of Midgley's reassessment of Shipps's historiography, see Louis Midgley, "No Middle Ground: The Debate over the Authenticity of the *Book of Mormon*," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 151, 166.

⁵³ See my paper pending publication for a critique of Duffy's philosophical shortcomings, entitled "Mormonism without Post/modernism. A Response to John-Charles Duffy."

revolutionary summons to bring down the walls of the archive—Mormon cultural history begins, right in the preface of the work of Mormon cultural history, by confessing its subjectivity. If the Mormon cultural history “takes advantage of the postmodern moment,” it does so by allowing postmodernism to reveal the essential weakness of the modern historiographical operation that can then be taken up into the actual work of writing.

At any rate, the era of Mormon cultural history has only just begun. Though it had its beginnings, according to the narrative I have here related, in the 1980s, it has only come to fruition, according to Jan Shipps, with the 2005 publication of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. But the proliferation of Mormon cultural studies in the two decades that passed between Bushman’s *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* and *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* is an indication that the seed has not only been sown, but has also already begun to produce in abundance. The work of Douglas Davies and Terryl Givens is only the most recognized of what is arguably emerging as a veritable genre of Mormon studies. The historiographical impact of Jan Shipps’s and Richard Bushman’s work is beginning to be felt, if it still remains to be seen exactly how it will unfold.

Preliminary Conclusions

As with the chapters on Brodie and Arrington, this chapter tells a single story: a historiographical model determines the story of the research behind *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* and *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* as much as it determines the use of historiographical apparatuses and the writing of

prefaces and introductions in these works. As much as Brodie's work is characterized by her need for a real but empty archive and Arrington's by his need for an archive open to everyone, Bushman's and Shipps's works are characterized by their recognition of the coming of age of the historical discipline and the need to see that discipline as having a complex relationship to real communities of belief.

What is most peculiar about this story, however, is the essential disappearance in it of the archive. Both Brodie's and Arrington's historiographical stories are stories of the archive. But Bushman and Shipps are, in their recollections, their writings, and their reflections, essentially indifferent to the archive.

One might at first suggest that this is a sign that, having begun to do serious work on Mormon history during the "Arrington spring," they essentially took the availability of the archives for granted. But this is manifestly not the case, since the pieces considered here by Bushman and Shipps were published right in the midst of the crisis that made the archival holdings of the Church off-limits to scholars. Indeed, if anything of their situatedness in the history of Mormon historiography determined their essential indifference to the archives, it would seem to have been their recurrent *inaccessibility* in the 1980s rather than their liberal accessibility in the 1970s. Finding themselves in a world of Mormon historiography that had, in significant ways, to make do without the archives, they invented a methodology that was structurally indifferent to the politics surrounding the archive.

Of course, helpful as such an explanation would be, it does not match the accounts of Shipps and Bushman. Both are emphatic that their models developed while

they were doing research in the archives. It would thus seem to be neither the availability nor the unavailability of the archives that led to their indifference to the political vitality of the archival trace. More than anything, it seems to have been a direct consequence of their recognition that Mormon intellectuals, as much as Mormons more generally, had at last become a genuine community, which led to further recognition that these two genuine communities cannot be neatly separated.

In the end, it would seem to be their attention to communities—as opposed to individual psyches (Brodie) or rigidly defined regional peoples (Arrington)—that is ultimately behind Bushman’s and Shipps’s shift to a hermeneutical historical methodology, consonant with their focus on specifically *cultural* history. Seeing that history can, in Shipps’s words, be taken “as text,” and that, because texts are always associated with what Paul Ricoeur calls a “community of interpretation,” such an approach calls less for an analytics than for a hermeneutics, for a phenomenological method that is willing to offer oneself through a “willful suspension of *disbelief*” in order genuinely to understand—whether one approaches that suspension from the position of the believer (Bushman) or the non-believer (Shipps).

But, yet again, further discussion would best be postponed until the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF THE IMMANENT ARCHIVE

The preceding three chapters do not add up to a history of Mormon studies, at least in any strictly narrative sense. But taking the publications of *No Man Knows My History*, *Great Basin Kingdom*, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, and *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* as the crucial moments or representative turning points in the story of the rise of Mormon cultural history, what can be said about the changing status of the archive across the shifting scene of Mormon studies in the second half of the twentieth and the first part of the twenty-first century? As pointed out in the introduction, what makes this question especially pressing in the history of Mormon studies is the remarkable—and irreversible—about-face that the official Church Archive seems to have made in recent years. In a program that seems only to be gaining momentum, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has finally made its archives open to everyone—through adjustments in archival policy, publication of key documents, construction of a new library facilities, and even the establishment of a Church Historian’s Press. However, in order at last to begin to wager a few more general archivological reflections, it is here necessary to begin to flesh out and to analyze the preliminary conclusions drawn at the end of each of the three preceding chapters.

To do so is, in essence, to tell anew the story taken up in the introduction to this thesis. There, the story of Mormon studies was told as the story of the changing face of Mormon historiography, marked by the announcement that the new Mormon history has come, at long last, to an end. Here, and by way of reflective conclusion, it is necessary to

tell the story of Mormon studies again, but now as the story of the changing structure of Mormon archivology, marked especially by the sudden turning inside-out of the archives of the Mormon Church. Of necessity, the telling of the *archivological* tale is an enterprise more philosophical than historical in nature. As such, what follows is not a mere rehearsal of what has been worked through in the introduction and first three chapters of this study. Rather, it is to probe the unfolding structural relationships that hold the history of Mormon archivology together.

My *modus operandi* here is relatively simple. After first reviewing the preliminary conclusion from each of the three preceding chapters, I will explore their significance at greater length. To probe this significance most profoundly, I will draw on the work of four contemporary thinkers (two recently deceased) whose work has heavily influenced archivology: Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière. They are all, significantly, French and are interested in the strange problematic that is the collapse of postmodernism after the 1980s.¹ Their archivological reflections, arranged into a kind of trajectory, might thus collectively show how the story of modern Mormon historiography is an illustration of the passage of the archive from modernism, through the postmodern crisis, to the contemporary and as yet largely unexplored status of the archive.

Preliminary Conclusions in Review

¹ John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy An Outline* (New York: Continuum, 2007); Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou, and Leclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

First, it was suggested that Fawn Brodie, true to her Freudian convictions, utilized a historiographical model that essentially emptied the archive, even as it clung to its authoritative structure. The crucial image in Brodie's telling of the story of Joseph Smith was the wooden chest in which Joseph Smith hid what were, for Brodie, non-existent gold plates, an archival void. For Brodie and her historiographical method, the stubborn existence of the wooden chest (the walls that give the archive its political reality) were quite as necessary as the non-existence of the gold plates (the actual documents making up the archival collection). Brodie's archive was the archive in which nothing more definitive could be found than what was to be found outside the archive—for example, the posthumously reconstructed history of Joseph Smith.

In this first phase of modern Mormon historiography, the archive functions as a political entity: its doorway is understood to be the scene of an essential (if delicate) violence²—violence that must, if it does not manifest itself of its own accord, be created or enacted through a staged confrontation over an ultimately unnecessary manuscript. The historian herself is, in this model, *also* a political construction, deriving her identity from a literarily deployed irony meant at all times to sustain the tension of the (staged) archival confrontation. In essence, the historian's political identity is, here, dependent on, or at least intertwined with, the political identity she assigns to the archive itself.

Second, it was suggested that Leonard Arrington, in continuity with the mild Marxism of professional history as practiced in the decades following World War II,

² This violence is structurally inseparable from the political status of the archive. Where the archive is taken as containing authoritative documents—especially, say, in the setting of a national archive—the doorway of the archive is the place of political confrontation. Thus it is that, throughout history, revolutions involve a storming, if not a burning, of the archives.

utilized a historiographical model that, in effect, leveled the walls of the archive in a revolutionary attempt to emancipate the archival trace from its prison. Everything in Arrington's magnum opus summons his readers to the work of archival research, calling for a populating—if not a popularization—of the archives, as much by interested laypersons as by academics. Arrington's archive was thus the people's archive, the archive made by the people that should be maintained for and made available to the people. It was, to use Marxist language, a working or a workers' archive, something to be ideally separated (though not violently wrested) from the institutional hierarchy associated with it.

In this second phase of modern Mormon historiography, the archive retains its essentially political structure: its doorway remains the scene of an essential violence—violence that might be postponed through the deployment of delicately liberal diplomacy, but violence that will eventually make itself felt nonetheless. What in effect distinguishes this second phase of Mormon historiography from the first is less the political structure of the archive than the historian's approach to it. The historian now hopes that, by pretending that the violence of the archive is unnecessary while tacitly recognizing its inevitability, he can find a place in the archives for the workers who will, slowly but inevitably, witness the withering away of (archival effects of) the institutional hierarchy. The historian here remains a political construction, though he takes the form of the political subversive rather than the openly antagonistic political enemy. As such, the historian's identity remains, as in the first phase of Mormon historiography, dependent on or at least intertwined with the political identity assigned to the archive itself.

Third, it was suggested that Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman, more attuned to texts and communities, utilized (and *still* utilize) a historiographical model that is in essence indifferent to the politically structured archive. Never bothering to raise the question itself of the archive—whether in recollecting the process of research, in deploying historiographical apparatuses, or even in reflecting directly on the nature of writing history—Bushman and Shipps focus much more directly on the complexities of warring interpretations. The archive of Shipps and Bushman, then, might be called the banal archive, the archive stripped of its historiographical and political transcendence. In the rise of Mormon cultural history, the archive has become a tool not unlike Martin Heidegger’s hammer, which ceases to be an object of thought as it disappears into its use.³

In this third and still contemporary phase of modern Mormon historiography, the archive has at last been stripped of its political structure. Not only is the doorway into the archive no longer the scene of an essential violence, the doorway itself—along with its “dialectics of inside and outside”⁴—ceases to exist as the archival records are published and made universally available. With the collapse of the political construction of the archive, there falls also the politically constructed historian, who had, whether after the fashion of the first or second phase of modern Mormon historiography, been dependent on the politics of the archive for her or his identity. Replacing the historian whose

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 97-99

⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 211-231.

identity had been structured by the fragile political structure of the archive is the banal historian whose contours remain to be spelled out further along in this chapter.

Taken as a story of archivology, the evolution of Mormon studies is something like—but only *like*—a Hegelian syllogism (usually summarized as “thesis, antithesis, synthesis”). Two apparently opposed and certainly distinct *historiographical* models (moments one and two) prove, on closer inspection, to be *archivologically* identical; both Brodie and Arrington depend, though in different ways, on the politically structured archive. But their supersession (moment three) is not, strictly speaking, an instance of Hegelian synthesis or sublimation, according to which logic an authentically self-conscious politically archivological historiography would come to take the place of the two earlier inauthentically (non-self-consciously) political models. Rather, what comes to take the place in Mormon studies of the two mutually defunct models of historiography—or, indeed, what essentially renders the two models defunct—is the novel, unanticipated appearance of a structurally *non-political model of historiography*, one that attends dutifully but without fear and trembling to a structurally *non-political archive*. The expected third, totalizing moment of what would appear at first to be a Hegelian syllogism is thus interrupted by the appearance instead of something *new*—a new model of the archive as much as a new model of Mormon historiography.

This basic archivological outline will have to be fleshed out in terms of the four thinkers mentioned above.

First and Second Moments: Jacques Derrida, Fawn Brodie, and Leonard Arrington

Jacques Derrida wagered his most extended archivological reflection is his characteristically “destinerrant”⁵ study, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Put simply—and therefore somewhat reductionistically—Derrida argues that the archive is always and can never not be emphatically political. That is, for Derrida, *every* approach to the archive can be reduced—“deconstructed”—to its underlying presupposition that the archive is what it is in the work of Fawn Brodie and Leonard Arrington. This calls for a bit of explanation.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida takes as his constant interlocutor the “father” of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, thus sharing with Fawn Brodie an interest in the theoretical strength of Freud’s work. And, indeed, Derrida’s entire study is grounded in an articulation of the archive that is very much in line with the implicit archivology of *No Man Knows My History*. The very title of Derrida’s study captures the fundamental tension that underlies Brodie’s archivological position: to suffer from “archive fever” is *both* (1) to suffer from a burning desire for the (continued existence of the) archive *and* (2) to suffer from a desire to burn the archives in their entirety. Derrida’s French title actually captures this tension better than the English: *mal d’archive* can be translated either as “the need for the archive” or as “the disease of the archive.”

Derrida ties this basic archival tension, as one would suspect in light of the subtitle of the book, to Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. While he does so in several ways, the most interesting of the connections he identifies is the analogy between the self-contradictory nature of “archive fever” and the Freudian play of the life and death drives,

⁵ John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 11.

the cosmic “struggle of Eros and Thanatos.”⁶ One’s conflicting desires toward the institutional archive (to perpetuate its existence; to destroy it definitively) is parallel to the neurotic’s conflicting desires toward his or her own psychic archive, the unconscious. But the kind of continuity Derrida can see between Freud’s theoretical approach to the psyche and his own theoretical approach to the archive only shows, in the end, that the life/death of the neurotic that Freud identifies can be interpreted in a non-psychoanalytic fashion. Indeed, *Archive Fever* is one of Derrida’s many attempts to show that there is something more fundamental at work in Freudian psychoanalysis than Freud ever realized. As he does in his other writings on Freud,⁷ Derrida here argues that tensions and struggles like the ones Freud labels neurotic need to be re-approached through the philosophical categories of immanence and transcendence.

In continuity with French postmodernism, Derrida claims that modernism as launched by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinkers has failed to be true to its initial axiomatic announcement of a complete break with (belief in) the transcendent (whether the transcendent takes the shape of God, the First Cause, the One, some historical metanarrative, a given political mythology, or whatever). But unlike many postmodernists, as Martin Hagglund has argued, Derrida does *not* see in this failure of modernism any reason to give philosophy back to belief in the transcendent⁸—something

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 338.

⁷ Exemplary are Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 196-232; Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); and Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁸ Martin Hagglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 107-163.

Freud was wont to do.⁹ Rather, Derrida sees the failure of modernity as calling for a recognition that whatever is immanent—and whatever there is is immanent—is by nature oriented to the transcendent, *even though the transcendent does not exist*. For Derrida, that is, immanence is structured by its relationship to (non-existent) transcendence.¹⁰

Translating this essentially metaphysical position into the terms of archivology, Derrida points out that the very etymological history of the word “archive” shows that “every archive . . . is at once institutive and conservative,” at once “revolutionary and traditional.”¹¹ The archive is, in other words, very much an institution at work in the immanent “time of life” (and thus it is “conservative,” “traditional”) *even as it is* structured by its relationship to non-existent transcendent possibilities (and thus it is “institutive,” “revolutionary”). Because the Derridean archive achieves its very real presence in the world through its appeal to some kind of transcendent *arkhe* (“the originary, the first, the principal, the primitive, in short . . . the commencement”),¹² *it realizes its immanence only by compromising that immanence*, and thus by essentially hollowing itself out or constructing a void within itself.

The Derridean archive is thus parallel precisely to the Freudian subject.

Compelled by a structurally immemorial event (the “primal scene”) to construct itself as

⁹ Peter Gay, *Freud A Life for Our Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 443-445; Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 352-356.

¹⁰ This is what allows Caputo to speak of Derrida’s “religion without religion,” even as it allows Hagglund to speak of Derrida’s “radical atheism.”

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

it were out of nothing, the archive/subject is the very real outline of an essential void.¹³ Thus Derrida's disagreement with Freud is not about the *structure* of the subject (or archive), but about the *possibility*—asserted by Freud, denied by Derrida—that the fundamental tensions structuring the subject (or archive) can be “cured.” (Hence Derrida's obsession, in *Archive Fever*, with Freud's paper on the possibility and/or impossibility of cure, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable.”) For Derrida, the human subject, like the archive, cannot not be structured by essentially political tensions.

Crucial to the parallel Derrida can draw between the structure of the archive and the structure of the Freudian subject is the curious immemorial status of the event or “primal scene.” For Freud, the neurotic subject's entire symbolic universe is constructed around some traumatic event that, because it is what set in motion the entire work of constructing the ego, cannot by definition be remembered. The archive, for Derrida, is similar: it gathers together so many traces of events, but cannot, by definition, give the visitor to the archives anything like an actual experience of the events. The archive itself might be said to be, for Derrida, merely a consignment of so many symptoms of the irretrievable event—a fact that is frustrating enough to drive one mad, to give one “archive fever.” The archive inspires at one and the same time a kind of obsession with the archive (the historian is convinced that if she only keeps looking, she will discover the decisive document, the proof she needs to lay out the event as it actually happened) and a kind of resentment toward the archive (the historian now and again wonders

¹³ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

whether it would not perhaps be best just to burn up all the traces so as to focus on the events that are still to come).

The strength of Derrida's archival reflections, then, is his recognition of the central question of the *event* in thinking about the archive. But the weakness of his reflections is his consistent contention that the event must be *transcendent*. For Derrida as for Freud, the event or "primal scene" *must* be immemorial, must be completely inaccessible to the historian (as to the neurotic subject and his or her analyst). This persistent assertion, on Derrida's part, that the event cannot be *immanent* leads to an equally persistent pessimism of sorts. For Derrida, life and history are infinitely fragile and consistently deconstructible things, shattered by human beings' unavoidable conviction that there *is* truth when, in fact, there is *no* truth (of the event). And so, for Derrida as for Brodie, the historian must content herself or himself with a kind of vague liberal ethics while confessing that "no man knows *any* history."¹⁴

But if Derrida thus so nicely articulates Brodie's central archival, must he not—given the argument waded above that Brodie and Arrington have dialectically identical archival—also articulate Arrington's archival? Without question. As much as Arrington meant to comfort his LDS readers in his preface to *Great Basin Kingdom*, there is a clear parallel between what he says about events central to Mormon religious history and what Derrida says about the event as such:

If, as the Mormons believe, Joseph Smith was personally commissioned by God to form the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the best

¹⁴ See Terry Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Žižek and Others* (New York: Verso, 2003), 247-248.

evidences in favor of the theory are [not the reconstructed sacred events themselves, but] the essential social usefulness of the church throughout its history, and the advanced theory of social action which Joseph Smith and his successors espoused during their lifetimes.¹⁵

Though Arrington here couches his language in terms of reassurance, his message essentially despairs of (discovering) the truth of the Mormonism's founding events. And thus Arrington, quite as much as Brodie, is given to a kind of vague liberal ethics: whatever "truth" can be found in Mormonism should not be sought for in the transcendent and irretrievable events it claims happened, but in its "advanced theory of social action."

Uniting Brodie and Arrington archivologically, then, is their joint commitment to what Jacques Derrida so rigorously articulated in the language of philosophy as the transcendence of the event and the immanence of the historiographical operation. Of course, this shared *archivological* position led Brodie and Arrington to drastically different *historiographical* positions. For Brodie, history remained a discipline of chronicling events. But, because the event (for her) is transcendent, Brodie judged history itself to be impossible ("no man knows my history"). That her entire study amounted to a sustained argument against the reality of the founding events of Mormonism merely follows from these theoretical commitments. For Arrington, on the other hand, the transcendence of the event meant that history must learn to ignore or bracket the event, that history must change in light of the transcendence of the event. The

¹⁵ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), ix.

work of the historian was, rather than evental, economic and sociological, taken with structural patterns and statistics. But despite these *historiographical* differences, Brodie and Arrington must be understood to have shared an essentially identical archivology.

This essential archivological identity of Arrington and Brodie may be more important than might at first appear from the historiographically focused telling of the story of Mormon studies. Because Arrington's historiographical model led him to bracket rather than to militate against the founding events of Mormonism, his appealingly modern and (for a time) scientifically viable approach was able to disguise its archivological continuity with that of the outrightly antagonistic Brodie. But this show of historiographical difference could only last so long. By the early 1980s, the Mormon Church had come to express quite as vehement a rejection of Arrington's historiographical methodology as it had earlier of Brodie's. In the end, then, it may well be that what was rejected by the Church was less the *historiographical methods* of Brodie and Arrington than their shared *archivology*. The institution effectively rejected the archivology that Brodie and Arrington bequeathed to the new Mormon history, and so the announcement of that rejection definitively marked the beginning of the end of the new Mormon history. And the immediate result—since no one seems to have recognized how central archivological questions were to what was happening—was a baffled crisis of historiography.

Intermission: Paul Ricoeur and Martin Marty

The bafflement of Mormon historians during this crisis peaked in 1983. A year had passed since Arrington left the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, and another

year would pass before the appearance of the first work of Mormon cultural history, Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*. In that crucial year of 1983, as mentioned in the introduction, Martin Marty addressed the Mormon History Association, taking as his subject the crisis of Mormon historiography. Recognizing the institution's lack of interest in and support for the new Mormon history, Marty suggested that Mormon historians consider constructing a hermeneutical historiography after the model outlined by Paul Ricoeur.¹⁶

Marty's recommendation is fortuitous for this study. Paul Ricoeur's work represents a sustained and unquestionably rigorous attempt to develop a hermeneutics that allows for both the rigors of critical history (with its commitment to immanence) and the exigencies of what might be a bit simplistically called the tradition of faith (with its commitment to transcendence). Thus where Derrida has been said to "rightly pass for a theist" because of the place he assigns to confessedly empty transcendence in his philosophy,¹⁷ Ricoeur might be said to rightly pass for an atheist because of the "vow of rigor" to which his hermeneutical philosophy tenaciously holds.¹⁸ Thus, by looking carefully at Ricoeur's project—both at the attempt it makes to move away from Derrida's archivological pessimism *and* at the essential limitation of Ricoeur's own archivology—it should be possible to mark quite distinctively the archivological chasm that separates Brodie and Arrington from Bushman and Shipps.

¹⁶ Martin E. Marty, "Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 3-19.

¹⁷ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, xviii.

¹⁸ Alasdair C. MacIntyre and Paul Ricoeur, *The Religious Significance of Atheism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969)

Though questions of historiography plagued Ricoeur throughout his career,¹⁹ it was not until relatively late in his career that he tied his reflections on historiography to a fully developed archival theory. Thus his most mature reflection, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, appeared in French only in 2000, and in English only in 2004. In fact, *Memory, History, Forgetting* functions, as Ricoeur explains, as a kind of late effort at correcting misguided moves taken earlier in his overarching philosophical project:

[I am] returning to a lacuna in the problematic of *Time and Narrative* and in *Oneself as Another*, where temporal experience and the narrative operation are directly placed in contact, at the price of an impasse with respect to memory and, worse yet, of an impasse with respect to forgetting, the median levels between time and narrative.²⁰

Thus this last of Ricoeur's reflections on historiography is primarily an effort to place the human faculty of memory/forgetting (which is not, as shall be seen, without archival importance) into the position of mediator between (1) history as an abstract, aleatory string of transcendent *events* and (2) history as a concrete, disciplined immanent work of *writing*.

One can recognize, in light of this self-assessment, that Ricoeur's entire career has been dedicated to unfolding the complexity of the presuppositions of modern historians.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Edward G. Ballard and Lester Embree (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 143-174; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., trans. Kathleen McLaughlin Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xv.

If the event is indeed transcendent, and if the work of archival research and historiographical reconstruction is indeed immanent, then the especially philosophical attempt not to despair of the truth calls for an ever-increasingly complicated philosophical project, one that must reconcile immanence and transcendence through a critique of the entire modern/postmodern project.

Ricoeur thus might be said to play the positive to Derrida's negative. Presupposing, like Derrida, that historians at work in the archive are caught between the transcendence of the event and the immanence of the historian's work, Ricoeur attempts to construct a theory of historiographical *forgiveness*.²¹ With this end in mind, Ricoeur takes up the task of working out "the formal condition of possibility for [the] gesture of archiving."²² And, consistent with his recognition in *Memory, History, Forgetting* that the human faculty of memory/forgetting must mediate between events and the archival work of the historian, Ricoeur suggests that "*testimony* takes us with one bound to the formal conditions of the 'things of the past,' the conditions of possibility of the actual process of the historiographical operation."²³ That is, what allows events to come into play at all for the historian is their appearance to someone who inscribes their occurrence—this inscription being testimony.

As Ricoeur makes clear, this privileging of the testimony—and of the witness who offers such testimony—means that the academic and, indeed, secular work of doing history is first and foremost a question of *faith* (and not, therefore, of knowledge): "the

²¹ *Ibid.*, 457-506.

²² *Ibid.*, 148

²³ *Ibid.*, 161, emphasis added.

witness asks to be believed.”²⁴ This fact “opens,” as Ricoeur says, “the alternative . . . between confidence and suspicion.”²⁵ In other words, the transcendence of the event (and hence, of the truth) makes historiography a hermeneutics rather than a science. The historian is cast as the believer or skeptic, being forced to *interpret* and even to *pass judgment* on the event in light of the witnesses’ written testimonies.

But while the analogy with the courtroom is never far from Ricoeur’s mind here, there is an important difference between the judge and the historian. While the judge deals with the spoken testimony of the examinable and cross-examinable witness, the historian works only with the written trace. The historian at work in the archive deals not with the voiced deposition of the living witness, but the narrative testimony of the written word. And, as Ricoeur points out, “narrative can be detached from its narrator,” making it not only “silent” but “an orphan.”²⁶ Rather than being, like the judge, confronted with the clamor of so many witnesses calling for justice, the historian must provoke the written traces of the past to speak in the first place. As Ricoeur says, “documents do not speak unless someone asks them to verify, that is, to make true, some hypothesis.”²⁷ The result is that “the document is not simply given, as the idea of a trace might suggest. It is sought for and found. What is more, it is circumscribed, and in this sense constituted, instituted as a document through questioning.”²⁸

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 164

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 166, 169 See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Flamingo, 1977), 142-148.

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 177.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

Thus whereas the judge is confronted by those interested in, or by, the event because of its implications for justice, the historian hypothesizes the event, proposes its having happened, and then begins to question the documents to see what they might say to confirm or to dismiss that hypothesis. The result is that the historian is necessarily left—regardless of how much progress is made—with the central question: *Did the event (at least as reconstructed) really take place?* The historian cannot escape the inevitable reality that, because the event was only subjectively experienced, incidentally mentioned in written traces, and serendipitously conserved in an archive, one can never *know* for sure which written testimonies are to be trusted and in what ways.

Ricoeur's archivology thus commits historiography to what he elsewhere refers to as a "double vow": "willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience."²⁹ Ricoeur explains in more detail:

on the one hand, purify discourse of its excrescences, liquidate the idols, go from drunkenness to sobriety, realize our state of poverty once and for all; on the other hand, use the most "nihilistic," destructive, iconoclastic movement so as to *let speak* what once, what each time, was *said*, when meaning appeared anew, when meaning was at its fullest.³⁰

Hermeneutical historiography is, in a word, bound at once to a kind of naïve faith in the truth of the irretrievably transcendent event *and* to an irremediable commitment to the Derridean rigor that must force one to despair of that truth.

²⁹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Through his almost cavalier refusal to give in completely to historiographical despair, it is clear that Ricoeur makes a serious advance on Derrida's essentially pessimistic deconstructive approach to history and the archive. Through a kind of stubborn faith, he refuses to believe that the modern/postmodern foreclosure on transcendence necessarily imposes an uncompromised exile on the notion of truth. But, recognizing the importance of the rigor of the modern/postmodern project, he can never make the leap to the truth itself. The result is a hermeneutical historiography that can be described as asymptotic: the historian can, writing from within the postmodern condition, never *reach* the truth, but nonetheless take it as a Kantian "regulative ideal projected on the horizon of [his or her] investigations."³¹

Of course, if one subjects Ricoeur's confessed motivations here to a rigorous analysis, his project must be considered Romanticist. Though Ricoeur suggests that tempering one's rigor with a "second naïveté"³² allows for genuine forgiveness (the "crisis of testimony" marks the "harsh way documentary history contributes to the healing of memory, of linking the work of remembering to that of mourning"),³³ he ultimately only takes this position through a kind of hunch that there is more to the story than what Jacques Derrida has told. But such a hunch, to avoid being merely Romanticist, must provide not only an increasingly complex historiographical theory, but an archivology that would overturn or at least shake the foundations of Derrida's

³¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Experience and Language in Religious Discourse," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn" The French Debate*, written by Dominique Janicaud, et al., trans. Bernard G. Prusak, Jeffrey L. Kosky, and Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 132.

³² Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim Kohak (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 76

³³ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 180.

archivology: it would be necessary to suggest that the event, as much as the historiographical operation, is immanent.

Thus, since Ricoeur's hermeneutical historiography makes a sustained effort to outstrip Derrida's essential historiographical pessimism, it is clear that Ricoeur's hermeneutics does not offer an archivology that is distinct from Derrida's. The result is that, while James Faulconer can note that there seems to be a rising interest among Latter-day Saints in the work of Paul Ricoeur (since the 1980s and Martin Marty's address to the Mormon History Association), he also must go on to point to a still more recent if nonetheless far less widespread Mormon interest in a thinker who has claimed essentially to have taken the definitive step beyond Derrida for which Ricoeur only wished. That thinker is Alain Badiou.³⁴ Though historians of Mormonism do not seem to have paid any attention to Badiou (certainly not in the 1980s, at any rate!), he provides a helpful theoretical framework for thinking about what began to happen in 1984 and 1985 with the work of Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman—especially as this differed from what Marty suggested might be done in Ricoeur's name.

Third Moment: Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Jan Shipps, and Richard Bushman

Inasmuch as Badiou takes the step beyond Derrida for which Ricoeur quite clearly yearned, he dismisses Ricoeur's optimistic hermeneutics quite as straightforwardly as he does Derrida's pessimistic disavowal of truth. Indeed, Badiou argues that "hermeneutics" as practiced by Ricoeur

³⁴ James E. Faulconer, "Response to Professor Tracy," in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, ed. Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 477. See also Adam Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

seems to be in the process of [merely] reinstalling a pious discourse, a religiosity whose little God would seem to constitute the minimum of transcendence compatible with that democratic conviviality to which we are told [by, for example, Francis Fukuyama, that] there is no longer any conceivable alternative.³⁵

Equating the Romanticist hermeneutics of Ricoeur with the vague liberal ethics espoused by Derrida—against which he polemicizes elsewhere³⁶—Badiou suggests that the only way around the problem posed by Derrida is a *heightening*, rather than a *tempering*, of rigor. This calls for some explanation.

Badiou's entire project is characterized by what he calls a "return of truth,"³⁷ a return that he emphatically claims is to be staged by dismantling the *lack of rigor* that appears in thinkers like Derrida. What he shows, first and foremost, about such thinkers is not that they have made a misstep in their logic, but that they do not recognize that they have made a foundational axiomatic decision that determines the ultimate conclusions they must draw. Derrida is, according to Badiou, quite right to suggest that whatever is transcendent (in Derrida: the event, the truth) must be despaired of. But, as Badiou powerfully demonstrates, thinkers like Derrida make an axiomatic *decision* about what is transcendent, and Badiou argues that neither the event nor the truth need be regarded as transcendent.

³⁵ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (New York: Verso, 2005), 126. Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

³⁶ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York: Verso, 2001)

³⁷ Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 119.

Badiou works out this argument at great length in his complex study, *Being and Event*. He contends that thinkers in the Continental tradition of philosophy—at the end of which stand both Derrida and Ricoeur—have betrayed Plato’s foundational recognition that *mathematics* is central to the philosophical project. Because Continental thinkers begin with the presupposition that philosophy is a kind of aesthetics, the very idea of rigorously, mathematically universal truth must be displaced or discounted. Taking up the developments of mathematics in the twentieth century and applying them in remarkably ingenious ways to the philosophical concepts with which Continental philosophers have been dealing since Kant, Badiou works out a “matheme of the event,” demonstrating the possibility of conceiving of events as *strictly immanent*.³⁸

Badiou suggests that to presuppose the immanence of the event, as well as of the truth, requires a reconception of the human subject: the erstwhile autonomous subject becomes instead a “subject to truth” (in the sense one speaks of a “subject to the queen”) who *constructs* rather than *arrives at* the truth.³⁹ The event’s immanence is thus marked by its generative position with respect to historiographical work: the event’s having taken place is thus the presupposition that guides the historian’s work, rather than what the historian hopes ultimately to show. It is thus that the historian’s work might cease to be merely hermeneutical and begin to be actually scientific.⁴⁰ The Badiouian historian, like the scientist, begins with a presupposed theory or model that is then utilized as one works

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 178-183.

³⁹ Alain Badiou, “On a Finally Objectless Subject,” in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 24-32.

⁴⁰ Badiou here follows his master, Louis Althusser, in suggesting that Marx and Lenin were, much more than they were communist thinkers, the discoverers of the historical *science*. See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

through the documentary record. The fruitlessly presupposed event, like the fruitless model of the scientist, will be discarded in favor of a better construction as one works with rigor and commitment to the truth.

But what ultimately sustains Badiou's rigor is not his conception of the historian's work, but his recognition of the axiomaticity of his work. Badiou does not claim that events *are* immanent, but that one must *choose* between conceiving of events as immanent (the scientific model) and conceiving of events as transcendent (the Romanticist model). Badiou's claim is that what constitutes the central conviction of modernity (and what modernity has thus betrayed in all its failures) is its decision against the transcendence of events. Badiou thus calls, in contrast with postmodernists, for a "second modernity,"⁴¹ one that is more scientific or modern in the end than the supposedly scientific or modern history of, say, the *Annalists*, who held that the event was unavoidably transcendent if not strictly non-existent.

Helpful as all of this is for the thinker of the archive, it must be noted that Badiou himself is *not* a thinker of the archive; Badiou has written no archival study.⁴² But Jacques Rancière, who is both an historian and a philosopher, has absorbed into his own emphatically archival and historiographical work Badiou's entire theoretical apparatus.⁴³ In his influential *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, Rancière brings Badiou's philosophy to the question of archivality. It is thus possible to

⁴¹ Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 13.

⁴² Indeed, it might be most appropriate to say that Badiou's philosophical work generally is anti-historical or even anti-archival. At the very least, it is characterized by an almost systematic lack of interest in historiography or archivality, even as it is obsessed with the question of the event.

⁴³ It should be noted that there are important points of disagreement between Badiou and Rancière. But it seems to me that their relationship to the question of the event is, more or less, the same

use Rancière's crucial study as the source of a Badiouian critique of the Derridean/Ricoeurian archivology with its emphasis on the event as transcendent.

Strictly speaking, Rancière takes as his target neither Derrida nor Ricoeur, but the *Annales* School of French historiography (a major influence on social history and, hence, Arrington and the new Mormon history). His argument against them is simple: the historiographical method of the *Annalistes*—whose influence in Arrington's work is quite palpable—effectively erases events (by presupposing their transcendence). Analyzing Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, he shows how Braudel intentionally displaces from his history proper the event of the king's death, telling it only after the history proper is concluded. As Rancière suggests, Braudel does this so that, by “recount[ing] this event [as] a nonevent, outside the location and place that should have belonged to it,” he can use it to announce “the death of a certain type of history, that of events”⁴⁴ Or again, taking as another example Francois Furet's *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Rancière shows that the *Annaliste* writes history so as to demonstrate that the “reign of the event” is merely “illusory,” a move that results ultimately in “the abolition of history” in favor of “sociology or political science.”⁴⁵

Rancière thus effectively shows that the historiographical banishment of the event—whether complete (as in Brodie) or in the shape of an infinite deferral (as in

⁴⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, trans. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

Arrington)—always amounts to the privileging of the political and thus of the politically structured archive.

For Rancière then, as for Badiou, one could say that there are two ways of doing history, each grounded in a distinct archivology. On the one hand, one can assume the event to be transcendent with respect to the archive and thus set oneself either the infinite (because essentially impossible) task of approaching the event hermeneutically or the simpler (or at least terminable) task of arguing that no events take or took place. On the other hand, one can assume the event to be immanent with respect to the archive and thus set oneself the task of reading the documentary record as so many aids to engaging the implications of the event in question. Vital for Rancière and for Badiou is the fact that this “either/or” *must remain* an “either/or”; because the transcendence or the immanence of the event cannot be determined, it must be decided by the historian.

A model of the shape this takes for Rancière can be found in his study, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Significantly, the only reference to the archive in Badiou’s writings is a reference precisely to this particular work of Rancière: “In [Rancière’s] very fine book of 1987, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, we have the prototype for an exhumation of archives in that most astonishing figure of the anti-master, Jacotot [the figure to whom Rancière’s study is dedicated].”⁴⁶ Importantly, Rancière’s *Ignorant Schoolmaster* begins with a prescriptive assertion of the immanence of the event that is central to the book: “In 1818, Joseph Jacotot, a lecturer in French literature at the University of Louvain, had an intellectual

⁴⁶ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (New York: Verso, 2005), 108.

adventure.”⁴⁷ This is no idle beginning, since Rancière’s entire study is effectively an argument against Jacotot’s contemporaries who claimed that nothing had actually *happened* in Jacotot’s “intellectual adventure.”⁴⁸ As Rancière points out in his definitive last sentence in the book: “The Founder had predicted it all: universal teaching [that is: the event] wouldn’t take. He had also added that it would not perish.”⁴⁹

The historiographical model here is profoundly intertwined with Rancière’s archivology: asserting that the event is immanent—that the event *happened*—Rancière can read the documentary record as a gathering of clues about the meaning of—the truths revealed in—the event.

That this Badiouian/Rancierean archivology is at the root of the historiographical methodology of Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman is obvious. Effectively deciding that the founding events of Mormonism *happened*—whether or not they actually did (something at least Shipps seems to be doubtful of)—and so deciding that the work of the historian in the archive is to begin to make sense of the implications of these events for a singular community or a singular gathering of several interrelated communities, Bushman and Shipps have invented Mormon cultural history. Rather than taking the archive as the place of despair (Derrida) or of hope (Ricoeur), Shipps and Bushman take them as the rather banal place where the equally banal traces of fascinating *immanent* events are stored. What drives the historian here is not the work of unearthing unknown facts, but of seeing how the presupposed event shapes and gives meaning to a culture or a people.

⁴⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 1

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 101-139.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

Interestingly, there is a kind of theory of events that is developed right in the work of Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman. This is especially striking in Shipps's *Mormonism*, where it takes the shape of a complex philosophical argument about the eventual nature of the *Book of Mormon*. Displacing the question of the historical *accuracy* of the *Book of Mormon*, Shipps asks about its *evental* character. Her argument is worth quoting in full:

1. History, the story of the past, is linear. It moves from step A to step B, from promise to consummation, from prophecy to fulfillment.
2. Since it was at one and the same time prophecy (a book that said it was an ancient record prophesying that a book would come forth) and (as the book that had come forth) fulfillment of that prophecy, the coming forth of the *Book of Mormon* effected a break in the very fabric of history.
3. This interruption of history's presumably inexorably linear movement wiped clean the slate on which the story of the past had been written, making a place for the story of a past that led directly up to "the new dispensation of the fulness of times" whose events would be recorded there.
4. Standing on the threshold of a new age, the first Mormons were, then, suspended between an unusable past and an uncertain future, returned as it were to a primordial state.
5. But as their future unfolded, the activities the Saints engaged in—reestablishing the covenant, gathering the Lord's elect, separating Israel from the Gentiles, organizing the church, preaching the gospel, building

up the kingdom—took on such a familiar cast that it is plain to see that they moved out of the primordial present into the future by replicating the past.

6. This replication was not conscious ritual re-creation of events, but rather experiential “living through” of sacred events in a new age.

7. Although it seemed strange and even dangerous in the modern world of nineteenth-century America, this activity allowed the Saints to recover their own past, their own salvation history, which, despite its similarity to words and acts, places and events in the biblical stories of Israel's history and the history of Christianity, was the *heilsgeschichte* of neither Christian nor Jew.⁵⁰

By identifying the way in which the *Book of Mormon* functions as an event—again, regardless of any existential claims the book might make on the existentially defined individual—Jan Shipps is able to uncover something fundamental about early Mormonism that would inevitably be missed by anyone beginning either with the presupposition that none of the founding events took place (Brodie) or with the presupposition that none of the founding events much matters for the historian (Arrington). The *Book of Mormon*'s emergence can—quite productively—be taken as an immanent event.

In the end, it may well be that it is only such an *experimental* history—one that is willing to wager the immanence and actuality of the founding events of Mormonism—

⁵⁰ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 52-53

that can receive the approbation of an institution for whom the stakes of history are so high. The sudden release of documents in such abundance that has corresponded with the advent of this experimental history certainly seems evidence that such is the case. One must ask, in light of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*'s claim that the "foundations of the Church are grounded in a series of historic events, without which the Restoration would be incomprehensible and impotent,"⁵¹ whether it is possible to do *Mormon* history without presupposing—at least for experimental purposes—that the founding events of the 1820s and 1830s took place. Regardless of whether the historian believes these events took place, it is arguably *not* Mormon history one chronicles if one dismisses the centrality of these events for the Mormon people. At any rate, it seems best to understand the relatively sudden turning-inside-out of the archives of the Mormon Church in these terms: with the dawn of a historiographical model that is intertwined with an immanent archivology, the church seems to have seen fit to make the archival record available.

Lingering Questions

Is there something universal lurking in the singular complex that is the story of modern Mormon historiography and its associated archivologies? Is it only the naïve wish of the defensively faithful Latter-day Saint to call Mormon cultural history a *finally* scientific historiographical methodology? Or might it be that there is, buried in this strange history and its associated archivological reflection, something to be learned about the very undertaking of history itself? More importantly for the questions raised by archivology, is it possible to find, in the drastic changes of policy in the past decade at the

⁵¹ Daniel Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 595.

headquarters of the Mormon Church, evidence that the very status of the archive vis-à-vis the historiographical operation needs reassessment, particularly as the modern/postmodern age seems rapidly to be passing away through a reborn philosophy committed both to immanence and to truth?

At the very least, it seems that the story of modern Mormon historiography is suggestive—that perhaps this all-too-American of religions has something to say about American historiography and American archivology generally. It has not been the purpose of this thesis to begin the complex explorations in historiography and archivology more broadly that might bear out these hints, but it seems to me that such explorations need to be done.

At any rate, if the new Mormon history has come to an end, it may well be that it has taken postmodernism and its obsessions to the grave along with it. What shape will history take after historians have woken up, not only from the “noble dream” of unassailable historical objectivity, but also from the equally “noble dream” of unassailable historical subjectivity? That question, it seems to me, is still in the process of being answered.

But it does seem possible already to begin to suggest that the recognition that both of these dreams are, in fact, dreams has begun to lead to a banalization of the archive, to the construction of an archive “without walls.” How this might yet shape social concerns as the twenty-first century proceeds remains, of course, to be seen.

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