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The *International Journal of Mormon Studies* is a European based internationally focused, peer–reviewed online and printed scholarly journal, which is committed to the promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship by publishing articles and reviews of current work in the field of Mormon studies. With high quality international contributors, the journal explores Mormon studies and its related subjects. In addition, *IJMS* provides those who submit manuscripts for publication with useful, timely feedback by making the review process constructive. To submit a manuscript or review, including book reviews please email them for consideration in the first instance to submissions@ijmsonline.org.

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EDITORIAL

David M. Morris
Editor

Since 2007, we have published one volume a year filled with scholarly articles, as well as book reviews. We will of course continue to do this, however, we will begin to publish book reviews directly, to the website and make a selection for each volume. This is to respond to the now numerous books and publications that are coming out.

In this issue, we are excited to publish a lengthy consideration of Mormon identity by Wilfried Decoo, as well as Armand Mauss' article 'From Galatia to Ghana'. Following which, we are able to publish, 'Sacred Secrecy and the Latter-day Saints' by Douglas J. Davies as well as articles by Alan Goff and Kirk Caudle. A number of book reviews also appear, all of which are available on http://www.ijmsonline.org. A special appreciation is extended to the contributors for their kindness in making available their submissions.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles and review books fairly and as formatively as possible. As an editorial board we hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

If you wish to make a comment or suggestions on its improvement, please feel free to email us at editorial@ijmsonline.org

To Insinuate All Ideas and Inevitably Mislead Historical Judgment: Epistemological Metaphor in Mormon Biography

Alan Goff

> *Yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats.* – John Locke

When Canadian and American surveyors were mapping the boundary between the two countries to fix the border (so the story goes), they worked their way to a high mountain valley in the West. As they surveyed toward a ranch with a tall pole flying a maple leaf flag, they realized that the home would fall on the southern side of the border. With some trepidation they knocked on the door of the house and told the old rancher that his house was on the American, not the Canadian, side of the border. To their surprise he joyfully embraced them and proclaimed, 'That's good news. I don't think I could have endured another of those Canadian winters'. Real changes are underway not only in history but within all academic disciplines. Those transformations usually go under the name of postmodernism, but they reflect a broader discontent with beliefs of modernity that have dominated intellectual analysis for hundreds of years. The old verities that used to guide the historical profession are no longer capable of performing that task; these alterations are not just changes in words and theories (although words have their impact) but are foundational revisions that affect events on the ground. Historiography (the story of how historians explain their approach to the past) is being revolutionized in a way that is quite literally taking the discipline of history back to its own past.

A Brief History of History

Whether one traces the beginnings of historical writing to the biblical writers or to Greek historians such as Herodotus or Thucydides, history has always been closely aligned with both literature and rhetoric.

Through the classical period and the Middle Ages rhetoric still served as the trunk with history and literature as two ramifying immediate relatives off that tree. In the modern period as the tremendous prestige of the natural sciences increased because of the advances wrought by science and technology, historians began to lament the rhetorical and literary alignment of history. First came changes in epistemology as Locke, the philosophes, Hume, and others proposed that empirical methodologies are the only valid ways to acquire knowledge. In the decades following the 1830s, Auguste Comte extended Enlightenment rationality, proposing that we didn't need religion and metaphysics anymore but humans had passed into a new adult age in which science was the only appropriate way to gain knowledge and build society. This philosophy became known as positivism. As positivism developed, it accumulated ideas that weren't part of Comte's epistemology (knowledge must be value free, one must clear one's mind of preconceptions, the researcher must be objective and free of all particularity). When this positivism was combined with von Ranke's archivally-oriented method in the 1880s at the same moment historians were emphasizing professionalism and method, historians wanted to divorce the discipline from its literary and rhetorical roots.

The twentieth century saw historians emphasizing more insistently the scientific foundations of the field. Scientific history had finally arrived, but was at the same time a delusion. One attitude toward the past is that held by the 'founders of professional history in the United States'. Noll variously calls this position positivistic, scientistic, or scientific. For this version of history, knowledge of the past is derived from empirical and verificationist procedures adopted from the natural sciences. It was held by H. T. Buckle in England and 'flourished in America from the beginning of modern university study in the 1870s through the First World War as historians routinely promoted the idea that history should be a strictly empirical science'. George Burton Adams exemplified this philosophy of history in his 1908 American Historical Association Presidential Address when he exhorted historians to leave philosophy of history to those unscientific humanistic fields: 'Questions concerning "the philosophy of history" were wisely left to "poets, philosophers, and theologians"'.[1] The historian should restrict himself to facts.

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[1] Mark Noll, 'Traditional Christianity and the Possibility of Historical Knowledge', in *Religious Advocacy and American History*, ed. Bruce Kuklick and D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 37.

During the twentieth century positivism morphed into new shape and dominated all disciplines under the banner of Logical Positivism (which later changed its name to Logical Empiricism). The main idea of positivism is that any assertion that isn't either synthetic (that it, true by definition—such as 'a bachelor is an unmarried man') or based on empirically verifiable evidence is nonsense, non-sense, or nonsensory—worthless as far as producing true knowledge. But such a position discards religion, ethics, aesthetics, and many other approaches as incapable of producing knowledge or truth. Increasingly, this variety of positivism came under attack since the 1960s and has been almost totally abandoned in philosophy, yet positivism lingers not just as the dominant common sense in history, political science, economics, and virtually every other field of knowledge (philosophy is perhaps the one exception because most philosophers know that positivism has been too thoroughly undermined) and in quotidian society's common sense also. Most researchers don't study the philosophy of their disciplines (philosophy of history or its watered down version historiography, literary theory, philosophy of science, philosophy of the social sciences, anthropological theory, etc.) and aren't aware of the distance between their post-positivistic disciplinary philosophy and the commonsensical positivistic notions prevalent among practitioners. Positivism came under siege in the 1960s, just as the New Mormon History adopted positivistic and objectivistic claims to assert that this new approach to Mormon history produces more valid interpretation of the past than those preceding it. All of academic history follows the Freudian storyline of one generation trying to overthrow the previous generation's work to displace the father figure.

During the course of the twentieth century, historians strove to write in the plain style, free of all metaphorical adornment, for they viewed rhetoric and tropes as just that, decoration after the cake was already baked—likely to distract historians from producing objective history but not built into the substance of history. The most extreme defenders of empiricism, as the Locke epigram notes, viewed metaphor and rhetoric as deceptive uses of language likely to confound and mislead. Any use of literary elements obstructs the historian rather than helping understanding of the past. History was to be empirically based and scientific, not rhetorically based and literary.

Criticisms of positivism were late coming to historiography and only began to penetrate Mormon historiography in the 1990s; all varieties of the objectivity ideal were discarded by historians familiar with discussions about positivism, narrativity, and objectivity in philosophy,

literary criticism, anthropology, and other fields. First Hayden White (applying high modernity—structuralism, not post structuralism or post-modernism until the late 1980s) asserted in the 1970s that all history writing is essentially a poetic act and that very little separates fiction writing and history writing. Increasingly sophisticated historians developed White's ideas: Hans Kellner, Frank Ankersmit, Jerzy Topolski, Jörn Rüsen, and Stephen Bann, to name a few. Narrative theorists have emphasized during this time that all storytelling is of a piece, and historians are storytellers. Fiction writers and historians use the same narrative techniques to portray reality, to achieve a reality effect; this reality effect is a rhetorical manoeuvre, so the historian must conceal from him or herself and the reader the rhetorical tools used to make it appear that the historian is effaced. The Great Divorce between literature and history that became the conventional wisdom in nineteenth century historians' minds is now in the process of being reversed. The reconciled couple is getting together for a Great Reunion that may prove as permanent as intellectual history might suggest is possible.

METAPHOR DON'T GET NO RESPECT

From Plato and Aristotle to Locke and Hobbes, metaphor has been viewed as parasitic, a hindrance to genuine knowledge. The denigration of metaphor was strongest in the modern period in 'that [strain of philosophy] running from British empiricism through Vienna positivism, which has denied to metaphors and their study any philosophical seriousness of the first order'.[2] One strain of modernity asserted that researchers could do without metaphysics; we call this variety of modern thought positivism; the following assertion is quite common among historians who believe they only do empirical work, not philosophical analysis:

> I am convinced that reality has dimensions far transcending human capacities to ascertain. Perhaps those dimensions impinge on human activity. It may even be, as Richard Lovelace has said, that history, viewed without allowance for spiritual forces, "is as confusing as a football game in which half the players are invisible." If those forces are discernible at all, though, the discernment must come through private intuitions, or the vision of prophets, or the inspiration of poets, of

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[2] Ted Cohen, 'Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy', in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 1.

the speculations of metaphysicians. They are not discernible through the tools of historians, strictly speaking, whose more modest task is to deal with things visible. Prophets or metaphysicians may, of course, point to matters of history. However, they are not by that motion acting essentially as historians, but as something else.[3]

All historians are also metaphysicians, but most have never performed the theoretical work of uncovering their taken-for-granted positivism. Under the influence of positivism, historians and other researchers believed they no longer needed metaphysics but could comprehend reality as it really was without the intervention of metaphysical notions that philosophy traditionally calls epistemologies, ontologies, and views of human nature. Hilary Putnam notes that positivists have dismissed these metaphysical ideas as nonsense: 'According to positivists themselves, metaphysical sentences are cognitively meaningless for the same reason as ethical sentences: they are 'unverifiable in principle.' (So are poetic sentences, among others.)' Putnam then cites Vivian Walsh summarizing the positivistic position: to say that murder is wrong is not cognitively meaningful because it is neither empirically verifiable nor synthetic. 'The person who wished to make the moral judgement would not accept this, and was told that the disputed utterance was a "pseudo-proposition" like those of poets, theologians and metaphysicians'.[4] Epistemologies—notions about how knowledge or truth is generated—aren't derived empirically, so the researcher must begin with metaphysical notions (even the idea that valid knowledge is derived only from empirical observation is a metaphysical assertion that can have no empirical basis). So also are ontologies—ideas about what is ultimate reality—and views of human nature, from which we derive our political and social prescriptions—metaphysical concepts that generate the interpretations of texts and the past that seem so self-evident to the researcher because he or she takes the metaphysical concepts for granted. We are all metaphysicians because we all accept some, often uncritical, epistemology and ontology.

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[3] Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. xvi–xvii.

[4] Hilary Putnam, 'Objectivity and the Science-Ethics Debate', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 143.

The idea empiricists in the modern period have advanced that we can have direct access to uninterrupted facts itself depends on an epistemology, so also the notion that metaphor distracts from true knowledge, and it largely has been the empiricist/positivist strain of modernity that has denied figuration any epistemological status or '(1) any capacity to contain or transmit knowledge; (2) any direct connection with facts; or (3) any genuine meaning. In what seems to me a peripheral consequence of the move away from classical positivism, this opinion about metaphor has been abandoned, and it is becoming common—almost customary—to credit metaphors with all three virtues'.[5] Fortunately, positivism has also declined in historiography in the last half of the twentieth century, and now in the historical field and virtually every other intellectual discipline metaphor is no longer viewed as a barrier to knowledge but as an essential foundation to understanding the past.

Metaphor, or figuration, can't be dispensed with. Metaphors can narrow or widen our vision and the explanations we permit of a phenomenon. The better the metaphor, the deeper our understanding of the world: 'Better metaphors are depth-metaphors conveying true meaning and true cognitive content'. Impoverished tropes restrict understanding but 'depth-metaphors bring us closer to reality, not by narrowing things down but by opening things up'.[6] The positivistic historian may cringe to know that he or she inevitably uses metaphor to understand the past, but such as reluctance doesn't change the necessity.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IN THE NEW MORMON HISTORY

In the 1960s—just as the positivistic orientation in American historiography that emphasized 'scientific', 'objective', "disinterested', 'detached' history free of ideology, particularity, and bias was beginning to crumble—the New Mormon History emerged and adopted the claims that were soon to be abandoned in the larger field of historiography. Receiving graduate degrees and being trained with a professionalizing ethic, these New Mormon Historians articulated their break with the previous version of Mormon history by emphasizing their detachment from ideology and freedom from ideological entanglements. One of the elements Paul Edwards claims New Mormon Historians share (that is, what makes them New Mormon Historians) is that they have broad training from a

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[5] Cohen, 'Metaphor', p. 3.
[6] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Paradise Mislaid: How We Lost Heaven and How We Can Regain It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 15.

number of fields, and therefore, 'very importantly, they are not bringing in a lot of preconceived ideas from their graduate professors'. Of these New Mormon Historians, according to Edwards, most 'have been educated in historical methodology at universities in America and in Europe which support the Germanic concepts of objective history'.[7] Space won't permit here a full development of the many positivistic claims made by those who advocate the New Mormon History, but a few can be detailed here. Jim Clayton asserts against Louis Midgley's criticisms of objectivity:

> This is not to say that the end justifies the means, but that religious history should be one-sided rather than neutral, immediately and directly faith-promoting rather than objective, and concerned with short-term consequences for orthodoxy more than long-term accumulations of wisdom.
> Deliberately taking a one-sided approach to history violates, in my judgment, the very essence of the historical craft, which emphasizes honesty, objectivity, and a willingness to tell the truth. Being fair to all sides, being suspicious of religious cant, partisan polemic, and propaganda are values that are at the very heart of historical craftsmanship. I am not suggesting that historians should not have a point of view or that historians can ever achieve total objectivity.[8]

Even with the recognition that total objectivity is impossible, the aspiration to a more chastened partial or functional objectivity is harmful because it conceals from the historian his or her own ideological commitments. Clayton continues to assert that 'Subservience to a particular religion is therefore incompatible with honest inquiry, whether by historians or by anyone else'.[9] These old commonplaces of positivitism continue to be asserted while at the same time New Mormon Historians vehemently deny that they are positivists. Commitment to positivism is just an alternative version of commitment to a religion.

The closest an advocate of the New Mormon History has come to explicitly making a sharp distinction between history and literature based on a positivistic distinction has been Brent Metcalfe's assertion that

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[7] Paul M. Edwards, 'The New Mormon History', *Saints' Herald*, 133, no. 11 (November 1986), p. 14.
[8] James L. Clayton, 'Does History Undermine Faith?' *Sunstone*, 7, no. 1 (March–April 1982), p. 34.
[9] Clayton, 'Does', p. 34.

if the Book of Mormon exhibits literary features, it can't at the same time be a historical text. Brent Metcalfe believes that any literary element in a story negates its historical quality: 'Everything we know about the Jaredite ruler bears an analogue to the corrupt Nephite king. These mirrorings suggest that one narrative may depend on the other, and that only one, or perhaps neither, represents a factual account of historical events'. Metcalfe repeats this notion, apparently unaware that it is a positivistic assertion: 'Still, allowing for a literary device, questions regarding historicity remain since it is possible that Noah and Riplakish were actually monogamists but were portrayed as polygamists to accentuate their debauchery. If Noah and Riplakish existed anciently, the historicity of every detail of their biographical sketches is nonetheless uncertain'.[10] Literary features are evidence of lack of historicity to a positivist. Similarly, Fawn Brodie in her biography of Joseph Smith asserts that Joseph Smith's mind couldn't distinguish between fiction and history the way her more disciplined mind can: 'It should not be forgotten, however, that for Joseph's vigorous and completely undisciplined imagination the line between truth and fiction was always blurred'.[11] Similarly, in more recent biography of Joseph Smith, Dan Vogel believes he can separate out the deceptive from the real in the Book of Mormon Story of Nephi and Laban:

> The predicament in which Nephi found himself with his brothers and Zoram—momentarily caught between the false perceptions of his brothers and the true perception of Zoram—is similar to the moral dilemma Joseph created for himself. He, too, was caught between his assumed role as translator and prophet and the consequences of the truth. By putting on a false identity, he was able to advance God's will as well as reunite his family and obtain for himself the feeling of spirituality he wanted; without the subterfuge, his only remaining options were force and coercion.12

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[10] Brent Lee. Metcalfe, 'Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993), pp. 170–71.
[11] Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd edn (New York: Knopf, 1982), p. 84.
[12] Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 134.

For Vogel, Smith is using fiction to make some true claim about the world. 'Perhaps, as a hint of self-perception it reflects Smith's belief that one could take on the role of a prophet and use the familiar language of scripture and yet feel that one is speaking the truth'.[13] Vogel believes, like Brodie, he can separate the ontologically authentic material from the fictional claims Smith advanced.

One of the most important transformations in historiography, as positivism has expired among its more sophisticated theorists, is the recognition that history is much like literature in the construction of narrative.

> The work of the historian and the work of the storyteller are not as far apart as positivism (which ignores the narrative dimension of historiography) would like to believe. There is more fiction in history than the classic historian will admit. In order to fashion a plot (from the Latin *fingere*, which has the same root as fiction), the historian works with fictional elements.[14]

A danger exists in too simply collapsing history into fiction, but a complex understanding of the relationship between the two must recognize that if one excluded the fictive elements in the writing of history, one would no longer have history. The return of literature to reside at the very heart of the historical enterprise requires a conversion in the way we think about the terms.

THE METAPHORICAL FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE

I live on the northern edge of the Sonoran Desert. Occasionally, especially during El Niño winters when the rain showers are spaced just right about two or three weeks apart, the Sonoran Desert will blossom with cactus flowers, poppies, lupine, marigold, and a range of other wildflowers. Similarly, we have lived in an intellectual desert about metaphor being led by guides such as Locke and the positivists. Only since the late 1970s have we seen the desert bloom with studies on metaphor. The overwhelming tenor of these inquiries is that metaphor is not merely ornamental in that they can be cut off the argument without any loss, but

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[13] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.
[14] Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 12.

metaphor is instead fundamental and foundational for our understanding. 'You don't have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not. Since the mechanism of metaphor is largely unconscious, we will think and speak metaphorically, whether we know it or not'. The choice is not between using metaphors epistemologically or not but between being critically aware of our metaphors or being gullible and uncritical.[15]

Literary critics (I, myself, am a literary critic) have a natural interest in the possibility that literary tropes are somehow essential to human understanding, but the consequences are widespread for psychology, sociology, history, and every other field that articulates, or is founded on, an epistemology (that is, for all disciplines) and every discipline that uses language to express its ideas. Don Browning and Terry Cooper refer to foundational metaphors or metaphors of ultimacy, ones that are necessary to generate knowledge."

> Uncovering the foundational metaphors of any system of thought, including a psychological system, frequently entails searching for them in the nooks, crannies, and margins of a psychologist's thinking or writing. For here, in these less formal precincts, the psychologist often reveals certain assumptions or postulates that are required to complete and make sense of the more formal and public aspects of his or her work. Psychologists, like everyone else, need to live in a unified world. . . . These more private worldviews are often expressed by the metaphors that they use, the unsaid implications of their sentences or lines of reasoning, and the general ethos and tone conveyed in their writings.[16]

Our metaphors are like lenses through which we see and understand the world—lenses without which we cannot see. When we understand tropes as necessary for understanding, metaphor is no longer just the domain of literary critics and orators but of all who understand, even historians.

Since the 1950s historians began shifting from the identification of their discipline with the sciences and transferred to the humanistic camp instead. 'From the late sixties onward historians who considered

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[15] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 [1983]), p. 257.

[16] Don S. Browning and Terry D. Cooper, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), p. 72.

themselves social scientists rather than humanists were often among those who most forcefully distanced themselves from some of the key elements in the older positivistic and empiricist position' that dominated the historical profession to that point.[17] The most radical of those rejecting the scientistic, positivistic, objectivistic synthesis was Hayden White in his 'insistence that history was pre-eminently a branch of literature'. White insisted that neither method nor objectivity can deliver scientific history. Instead, 'it was the historian's poetic consciousness which was decisive'.[18] In the eyes of traditionalist positivistic historians, 'the most sacred boundary of all was that between history and fiction, and nothing outraged historians more that White's blurring of that dividing line'.[19] For White, all historical understanding of the past is essentially poetic and that poetic element is inextricably linked with ideological elements. White's approach is tropological, emphasizing the metaphors by which classical historians have constructed their interpretations of the past.

White is a working historian, but philosophers of history also emphasize that historians have only recently been made aware of this essentially literary act that historians perform. For the century-and-a half during which historiography operated under scientistic aspirations historians forgot the literary aspects of their writing and understanding. 'In the course of this process, the rhetoric and literary structure became more and more overlooked and suppressed'. But now historians are once again remembering and exploring this connection to fiction[20] and that re-examination is having profound impact on historiography. Hayden White began his attack on scientistic history in the 1970s from within high modernism—structuralism, drawing upon Northrop Frye's literary criticism. White has long since made the passage across the border to postmodernism. White collapses the distinction between fictional stories and historical stories. 'All stories are fictions. Which means, of course, that they can be true only in a metaphorical sense and in the sense in

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[17] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 597.

[18] Novick, *That Noble*, 599.

[19] Novick, *That Noble*, 600.

[20] Jörn Rüsen, interviewed in Ewa Domanska, *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), pp. 146–147.

which a figure of speech can be true'.[21] The historian transforms the archival material in narrative form and its truth is thereafter figurative. 'The tropological theory of language, then, threatens history's centuries-long claim to deal in facts and therewith its status as an empirical discipline'.[22] This approach doesn't deny truth, but it does contradict a positivistic notion of truth. One could add to Kant's transcendental aesthetic the tropological category of the mind. 'Tropological theory . . . appears to undermine the legitimacy of the claims to truth of the traditional mode of historical discourse, the narrative'.[23] The resulting narrative appears to be invented, not found. But these problems are dissolved if the historian relinquishes positivistic and empiricist theories of truth that can no longer garner theoretical support. For White figurative historical accounts are true not only because all historical narratives are tropological, but also because 'figurative language can be said to refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do'. The binary opposition between metaphorical and literal no longer holds because each thoroughly penetrates the other.[24]

History has a huge stake in these claims about human understanding's being ineluctably tropological because history has ignored the claims for so long that a huge gap has opened between what most historians recognize to be the case about historical interpretation and what tropological theory or other varieties of contemporary historiography assert.

METAPHOR IN JOSEPH SMITH BIOGRAPHY

Hayden White makes a second main point: all historical accounts are ideological—inevitably, ineluctably, inexorably. Our reasons for preferring one historical conclusion over another are primarily aesthetic and ideological rather than logical or evidentiary. In fact, the ideological commitment is inextricably bound up in the poetic. The historical tropes are often the point where ideological elements are inserted into the account without argumentation or support; the metaphor itself carries the argument. Following White's exploration of the metaphoric

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[21] Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 9.
[22] White, *Figural*, p. 15.
[23] White, *Figural*, p. 16.
[24] White, *Figural*, p. vii.

of history Richard Vann notes tropes fundamentally shape the historical narrative by excluding some possibilities and enabling others: 'Metaphors—it is not clear whether the historian should use one master metaphor or several—thus establish relevance and justify selectivity; and would be sufficiently powerful to inform an entire historical work'.[25] Mormon biography is a good case study for the influence of tropes on historical interpretation because the historical issues are disputed and the ideological gaps between biographers are so great.

FAWN BRODIE'S *NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY*

Some historians use one overarching metaphor throughout the account to make sense of the story, to provide narrative coherence and structural continuity. Most use a series of figurative images to serve local needs in the narrative. Among the latter group are those biographers or historians who often return to preferred metaphors. Fawn Brodie often resorts to three types of metaphors in her biography of Joseph Smith: psychological metaphors about the state of the subject's mental world (it is later in her more explicitly psychobiographical works—such as the Nixon biography—that Brodie more consistently uses the-child-is-father-to-the-man trope; Brodie uses this figure that finds in childhood events typological prefiguration of adult actions in her more Freudian 1982 Supplement but infrequently in the 1945 version of the biography) literary metaphors (Brodie was not trained as a historian but—both studying for her B.A. at Weber College and her M.A. at the University of Chicago—as a literary critic or literature teacher) use simile or metaphor to compare Mormon scripture to novels, discuss symbolism, or relate how Smith uses fictional methods to build a narrative dramatic, imaginative, or acting metaphors to demonstrate how Smith fabricated a prophetic role or persona for himself.

These epistemological metaphors in Brodie's work are used throughout her Joseph Smith biography.

All three of these metaphors are used on the facing pages 84 and 85 in the revised edition of Brodie's biography. Assured that Joseph Smith consciously lied in the creation of the Book of Mormon, asserting it was an ancient document he found and translated, Brodie uses psychological metaphors. The larger conceptual background of Brodie's

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[25] Richard T. Vann, 'Turning Linguistic: History and Theory and *History and Theory*, 1960–1975', in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 63.

assertions regarding the Book of Mormon and historiography is this: Brodie applies a positivistic distinction between history and fiction in order to downplay the claims of the Mormon scripture. Brodie asserts regarding Smith's imaginative capacities 'that for Joseph's vigorous and completely undisciplined imagination the line between truth and fiction was always blurred'.[26] The boundary between history and fiction in premodern societies such as the narratives given us by African folklore and oral literature, as Irele notes, 'in which the boundary between history and fiction is, for all intents and purposes, non-existent, or, indeed, inconceivable, a boundary that, when all is said and done, is ultimately a view of the analyzing, positivist mind intent on ascribing truth value to one and withholding it from the other'.[27] Contemporary philosophical, literary critical, and historiographical analysis agrees that the boundary between history and fiction is always and inevitably blurred (even for those with 20/20 vision, to use a common metaphor of sight that Brodie often resorts to[28] and Richard Rorty has analyzed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*). So Brodie is applying a metaphor about blurring boundaries selectively to Smith in order to advance an ideological program. It is a positivistic fantasy that history is not imaginative:

> This makes history, by definition, an over plotted genre, even outrageously so for one claiming a higher degree of verisimilitude than fiction. History's reality has no room for contingency, although we acknowledge that reality untouched by interpretation is nothing but. No amount of pontificating about facts and evidence, research, archives, or scientific methods can get around the central fictionality of history, which is its unrelenting meaningfulness. Nothing could be more unreal, more flagrantly fictional, or more necessary.[29]

Brodie's trope of blurred lines between imagination and reality, fiction and history lead into her psychological metaphor about deception and mental balance. Without archival or any other evidence for what Smith thought on this point, Brodie nevertheless speculates about the impact of his 'deception': 'It is doubtful if he ever escaped the memory of the

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[26] Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.
[27] F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 102.
[28] Brodie, *No Man*, pp. 89, 101, 128, 405.
[29] Nancy F. Partner, 'Making Up Lost Time: Writing on the Writing of History', *Speculum*, 61, no. 1 (1986), p. 102.

conscious artifice that went into the Book of Mormon, but its phenomenal success must have stifled any troublesome qualms. And at an early period he seems to have reached an inner equilibrium that permitted him to pursue his career with a highly compensated but nevertheless very real sincerity. Certainly a persisting consciousness of guilt over the cunning and deception with which his prophetic career was launched would eventually have destroyed him'.[30] The metaphors here advance the speculation so Brodie can assume artifice or deceit in the absence of historical evidence. She must use artifice to produce a narrative about psychological balance by intuiting a state of mind and conscience.

Brodie also commonly uses literary metaphors to advance her understanding of Smith's mind and life. She tells a story she admits isn't true, is apocryphal: a story about a deceiver who claimed to walk on water but had built a wooden platform beneath the surface to walk on. But before being demonstrated, some neighbourhood pranksters had removed some planks and the prevaricator almost drowned. This story migrated from its original context to be told about Joseph Smith. 'Baseless though this story may be, it is nonetheless symbolic'.[31] This is a curious notion that a story clearly manufactured and reported to diminish Smith's credibility is used to symbolically reveal the real mental life of a historical figure although it is false. The irony in addition to the ideology is that on the very same page that a fictional story about Smith is nevertheless asserted to be symbolically revealing and truthful, Brodie also insists that the Mormon prophet blurred 'the line between truth and fiction', as does Brodie in the act of asserting the distinction. Symbolism isn't solely a literary feature (for everyday life is full of symbolism) nor is the imagination ever present from historical writing, but these two facing pages of biography return so often to literary language to describe the events of Joseph Smith's religious life.

The psychological equilibrium Brodie will discuss in just a few paragraphs is foreshadowed with assertions about 'inner turmoil'. Brodie claims Smith soon developed from being a confidence man to being a prophet. Because Brodie has no historical evidence, she must use instead omniscient narration speculation: 'it is not easy to trace the steps by which Joseph assumed this role. Apparently he slipped into it with ease, without the inner turmoil that preceded the spiritual fervour of so many

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[30] Brodie, *No Man*, pp. 84–85.
[31] Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.

of the great religious figures of the past'.[32] That word *apparently* Brodie uses to drop this speculation into the argument without a diary entry, a witness who reported his discussion of the matter, or any of the evidence historians usually required to report a person's thoughts. Becoming a prophet was a matter of assuming the role and acting like one and moved Smith from 'inner turmoil' to 'inner equilibrium.' Only an omniscient narrator and God can divine the mind with non-existent textual evidence. Brodie is using a combination of literary and dramatic tropes to generate a particular conjectural thought process for her narrative.

After the return to mental balance that Brodie posits Smith must eventually have acquired after his frauds, she returns to discussion of his dramatic role and the audience who accepted that persona: 'Joseph's great dramatic talent found its first outlet in the cabalistic ritual of rural wizardry, then in the hocus-pocus of the Gold Bible mystery, and finally in the exacting and apparently immensely satisfying role of prophet of God. His talent, like that of many dramatic artists, was emotional rather than intellectual and was free from the tempering influence that a more critical audience would have exercised on it'.[33] The literary and dramatic tropes—combined with speculation about Smith's thought processes as if the biographer can read the distinction between emotional and intellectual free of archival evidence—permit Brodie to assemble an argument without the usual documentation and evidence historians are customarily required to produce.

RICHARD BUSHMAN'S *ROUGH STONE ROLLING*

A reader could hardly imagine a greater ideological chasm than that between Fawn Brodie and Richard Bushman. Brodie dismissed Smith's claims, the Book of Mormon, and the ideas propounded by Joseph Smith; Bushman accepts and believes in them and this belief informs his historical work just as much as Brodie's ideological commitments inform her interpretations. Her training in literature makes one suspect that she delves into historical explanation in much the same way a novelist might explore a character's thought by using limited (or perhaps even unlimited) omniscient narration. As an example of Brodie's omniscient narration, read how she develops the workings of Smith's mind using metaphors of moulding shapes and catechizing minds. His

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[32] Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.
[33] Brodie, *No Man*, p. 85.

opportunistic use of Calvinism or Arminianism, among other concepts, shows

> the facility with which profound theological arguments were handled is evidence of the unusual plasticity of Joseph's mind. But this facility was entirely verbal. The essence of the great spiritual and moral truths with which he dealt so agilely did not penetrate into his consciousness. Had it done so, there would have been no book. He knew these truths as intimately as a bright child knows his catechism, but his use of them was utterly opportunistic. The theology of the Book of Mormon, like its anthropology, was only a potpourri.[34]

This is fairly subtle mind reading to know that Smith could use these ideas—and even use them subtly—without understanding them or even considering them. These ideas were verbal only, penetrating his words but not his thoughts. The ideas are profound and the Book of Mormon handles them agilely, but these are only surface uses because Smith didn't understand them. Brodie's use of metaphors works against each other, for how can you compliment someone for his profound use of deep ideas but castigate the thinker for throwing them off too facilely? If the only evidence Brodie has for this habit of mind is what she includes in her book, then her forays into mind reading are more seerlike than any religious figure's.

Bushman grants more influence to Joseph Smith's environment (especially his use of magic) than most Mormons would be comfortable with. For example, Bushman posits that the translation of the Book of Mormon was a natural development from Smith's treasure seeking activities: 'The boy who gazed into stones and saw treasure grew up to become a translator who looked in a stone and saw words'.[35] Just before this passage, Bushman incorporates one of his recurrent metaphors to understand Smith, the figure of prophetic evolution. Bushman posits that Book of Mormon translation 'evolved naturally out of his earlier treasure-seeking'.[36] This evolution from a spiritual activity that we recoil from (treasure hunting and other forms of magic) to one that Mormons celebrate (translation of ancient texts by the power of God) seems like an odd trajectory, but one that Bushman asks his reader to consider.

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[34] Brodie, *No Man*, p. 70.
[35] Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), p. 73.
[36] Bushman, *Joseph*, pp. 72–73.

Bushman posits that magical pursuits as a youth grew into pro-phetic activity as an adult. In this transformation, the year 1828 is crucial, for he took possession of the plates and beginning to translate; this year 'is a turning point in Joseph Smith's development'.[37] This trope of evolu-tion to a higher form is crucial to Bushman's reconciliation of the magic enterprises with the prophetic roles. No longer 'entangled with the money-diggers' the 'treasure-seeking language has disappeared' for now Joseph Smith had 'found his prophetic voice'. The Mormon scripture had given 'language [that] was biblical rather than occult'.[38]

Notice how much more restrained Bushman is in projecting his own understanding of Smith's mind than is Brodie, but he still uses psy-chological tools in this evolution of the subject from village scryer to prophet of God. 'With Joseph's realization of himself as a prophet, the rearrangement of memory began. When Joseph tells his history from 1828 on, his search for treasure as a boy became an irrelevant diversion of his youth. Treasure-seeking did not lead to the person he had become. His true history began with his search for a church and his plea for for-giveness'.[39] Bushman posits that Smith himself didn't see how an apprenticeship in magic had prepared Smith to be a seer: 'Magic had played its part and now could be cast aside'.[40]

This notion of a prophetic identity not being established by God but by the particular evolution of the human's personality (perhaps un-der divine influence) is no doubt a new way to think about prophecy for most Mormons. But Bushman quite often refers to this progression con-cept: 'At a time when Joseph's prophetic identity was jelling . . .'[41] is one example. Another time Bushman sees development of prophetic identity when Smith introduced the concept of priesthood (so the Book of Mor-mon experience was not the only crucial tipping point in prophetic development): Joseph Smith might have at first introduced a confused notion of priesthood because 'Joseph could no more grasp its meaning than he comprehended the full significance of the First Vision as a teen-ager. Although he understood such Church offices as teacher and elder, it took time to comprehend that the powers of priesthood were included

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[37] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.
[38] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.
[39] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.
[40] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.
[41] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 66.

in the authority that went with those offices'.[42] Smith's entire prophetic career is one of progression to higher and unexpected levels of thought and organization for "revelation overturned old ideas and was forever evolving"[43]

One of Bushman's most common metaphors is the figure of divergence. Joseph Smith appears to conform to his own environment at first blush, but he and his intellectual products swerve radically from expectations. 'The accounts of the neighbors picture an unambitious, uneducated, treasure-seeking Joseph, who had never written anything and is not known to read anything but the Bible and perhaps the newspaper. None of the neighbors noted signs of learning or intellectual account for the disjuncture between the *Book of Mormon*'s complexity and Joseph's history as an uneducated rural visionary'.[44] Between what an uneducated frontier rustic could be expected to produce and the writing in the Book of Mormon is a vast chasm.

The divergence between the anticipated Joseph Smith and the reality that emerges is a radical departure for 'blending was an issue for Joseph. His whole life divided between the ordinary and the strange. At times he appeared to be two persons. We can hardly recognize Joe Smith, the ignoramus and schemer of the Palmyra neighbors, in the writings of Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer. The writings and person seem to have lived in separate worlds'.[45] The same holds for other scripture produced by Smith because antebellum America saw a series of writers producing epics of scope and ambition, but Joseph Smith 'stepped out of his own time into antiquity in search of the origins of civilization'.[46] Where Brodie sees a common con man who produced wondrous but explicable writings and institutions, Bushman finds between the environment that produced Joseph Smith and the resulting worlds of scripture and prophecy a gap unbridgeable by any human engineering.

DAN VOGEL'S *THE MAKING OF A PROPHET*

Nowhere in Mormon biography is the ideological saturation of tropes more evident than in Dan Vogel's work. Like other biographers

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[42] Bushman, *Joseph*, pp. 158–59.
[43] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 172.
[44] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 72.
[45] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 45.
[46] Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 290.

and most historians, Vogel uses metaphors to solve local problems of understanding. But he also returns consistently to the following preferred figurations: psychological metaphors—Vogel is doing psychobiography, so it is natural for him to use psychological metaphors, especially in his introduction and when he explicitly refers to psychological tools such as family systems theory, internal and external conflict, or stream of consciousness notions. Vogel notes that 'in writing this biography, I did not want to provide a simple chronological narrative of Smith's early life. Rather, I intended to consider the psychological implications of Smith's early actions and beliefs and get as close to the man as possible'. This proximity trope, that one can get closer to the historical figure by using extensive psychological speculation about what the subject might have thought, is dubious. Guesswork is guesswork, especially when the psychobiographer has no psychological and or clinical training to restrain the ideological tendencies that can overtake the interpretation when psychological conjecture is driven by deep emotional needs. But these psychological figures of speech permit Vogel to engage in broad and uncontrolled speculation that goes far beyond historical evidence. Vogel continues equating interpretive biography with speculation: 'Thus I have written an interpretive biography of an emotional and intellectual life. I will occasionally use qualifying verbs and adverbs to indicate where my analysis is speculative or conjectural, but my overall discussion and conclusions are firmly grounded in the primary source documents'.[47] Vogel's resort to psychological speculation is anything but occasional; it is constant, overwhelming, and ideologically driven; the conjecture is often unmarked by a *maybe*, a *perhaps*, an *if*, a *probably*, or some other indicator of inference.[48] Addicts in denial view their use of drugs also to be occasional, under control.

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[47] Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. xvii.

[48] For example, when Smith falls from exhaustion after his night-long interviews with Moroni, 'it was here, midway between his father in the field and his mother in the house that Joseph decided to make his midnight musing reality. The transformation had not come easily. Joseph had suffered a great deal of anguish and struggle. He hesitated, knowing that he would be plunged into deception and fantasy but saw it as the only way' (Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 45). It is through imaginative guessing that Vogel would know about anguish, about his thoughts 'here, midway', about the difficulty of this decision, about the consideration concerning deception and fantasy. These details provide a reality effect, but the reader must recognize them as Vogel's thoughts, not Smith's.

Vogel often uses acting tropes because he rejects Smith's claims to ontological status as a prophet called by God; Vogel's metaphysics rejects real divine intervention to raise common people to the level of prophet, so Vogel labels Smith's assertions to be a psychological role constructed by the first Mormon. The prophetic status is a role or a persona Smith put on like a costume. Similar to dramatic-role tropes are Vogel's literary tropes about narrative stance, about psychological alter egos much like the ones we might find in Conrad, and metaphors about storytelling.

Like Vogel's psychological analysis, Vogel's use of literary and dramatic terms betrays a superficial exposure to literary theory. For example, Vogel skates along the surface of Book of Mormon narrative without revealing its literary depth and profundity in order to use terminology such as flat characters and alter egos to produce a one-dimensional

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This passage is both conjectural and speculative, yet it has no 'qualifying verbs or adverbs' marking it as such. Vogel's narration of Smith's thoughts is quite similar to, for example, what you would find in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Shandy narrates from a first person perspective (discussing events just before his birth, so this narrator couldn't have been present to evaluate the external evidence of thought or emotion) but still manages to penetrate the mind of his uncle. Obsessive about fortifications after being wounded in battle, Uncle Toby became as monomaniacal about battle maps as Vogel does about finding deception in the Joseph Smith story: 'The more my uncle Toby drank of this sweet fountain of science, the greater was the heat and impatience of his thirst, so that, before the first year of his confinement had well gone round, there was scarce a fortified town in Italy or Flanders, of which, by one means or another, he had not procured a plan, reading over as he got them, and carefully collating therewith the histories of their sieges, their demolitions, their improvements, and new works, all which he would read with that intense application and delight, that he would forget himself, his wound, his confinement, his dinner' (volume 2, chapter 3). Like Sterne, Vogel must impose his own construction of the character's thoughts on the characters. Notice how restrained Donna Hill is in recounting the episode of Joseph Smith after his night of visions with Moroni (p. 58) compared to Vogel. Similarly, Bushman is positively restrained in reading Joseph Smith's mind during this episode (Bushman, *Rough*, p. 45), merely suggesting a possible reason for Joseph Smith, Sr.'s reaction to his son. Similarly, Terryl L. Givens is content to summarize the historical sources for that morning of September 22, 1823 rather than imposing his own thoughts and constructions as Joseph Smith's (Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002]), p. 14.

analysis that merely finds superficial parallels between the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's biography.

Vogel's use of psychological speculation to find parallels between Smith's life and the Book of Mormon is one among many examples I could use. In particular, the Book of Mormon story of Abinadi is a working out of Smith's own fears and fantasies. I'll underline the language of guessing in the following passage to show how the saturation of conjecture works with the psychological figures and ideological striving. Abinadi is imprisoned and cross examined by King Noah and his henchmen:

> Undoubtedly, Smith's claims drew similar cross examinations, not only during his 1826 trial but also from the residents of Harmony. In any case, Smith failed to confound his enemies. The story of Abinadi may reflect a psychological defense against failure and frustration, which Robert D. Anderson variously calls "omnipotent fantasy," "compensatory fantasy," "fantasy conquest," and "fantasy reversal." In other words, Smith could relieve feelings of frustration and humiliation through characters in this book accomplishing what he could not do in real life: to vanquish, powerfully and convincingly, his enemies. However, the price for doing so in Abinadi's case was death.[49]

Vogel's novelistic tools of invention are able to generate this psychological analysis. Similarly, when Mormon discusses the depravity of both the Nephites and Lamanites toward each other in war, Vogel sees in this Smith's researches into crimes committed by and against Native Americans and psychological reaction to that violence:

> They resemble the atrocities ascribed to Indians in Smith's day, as well as the violence that Anglos committed against Indians. On a deeper level, Mormon's words show how intense Smith's emotions over his own family situation were (Morm. 6–7). One is justified in seeking psychological meaning in Mormon's words, for they are laden with intense feeling and narrate the culmination of family strife that began with Nephi and his brothers. More poignantly, Mormon may point to the feared breakup of Smith's family, which Smith desperately

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[49] Vogel, *Joseph*, pp. 179–180.

wants to avert. The language can be seen as a symbolic, unconscious window to the soul.[50]

Vogel has made a whole series of prior speculations that this one is built upon: that the Book of Mormon reveals Smith's psychology that the book is a therapeutic novel by which the author works out his own stresses, that this kind of psychological analysis takes a reader deeper rather than more superficially into the book.

Even when Vogel is discussing Joseph Smith's life when not trying to make a comparison to the Book of Mormon, he resorts to psychological terms and metaphors in order to explore the character of Smith when ordinary historical evidence is absent. 'Joseph Jr.'s refusal to drink any alcohol during his 1813 surgery <u>may be explained</u> as an internalization of his mother's revulsion of alcoholism and for what it was doing to her family. <u>If the son</u> could undergo an operation without alcohol, <u>he seems to have been saying</u> to his father, then his father could go through life without it'.[51] This omniscient narration explores thoughts Smith never expressed and ideas never articulated by his mother. These are fictionalizing techniques used to develop a particular form of characterization, they are Midrashim on psychological theories.

Vogel's introduction, like most introductions to biography, is where the writer feels freer to speak in the first person and reveal more, opening the ideological commitments of the writer; this shifting in narrative voice is often called enunciation in narrative theory. It is a natural place for Vogel to speak in the first person and articulate his psychological metaphors. For instance, Vogel links his conception of charlatans and magicians with Freudian concepts of children and parents: 'Magic is an escape from the real world to a simpler time of fantasy when our parents were all-powerful and we were immortal'.[52] Vogel even mingles the psychological metaphors with his discussion of roles and personas resulting in mixed metaphors: 'We need not confuse Smith's inner, spiritual world with the image he projected to followers . . . . Historians must similarly distinguish between the public and private Smith and carefully unravel the many layers of his image, created in large measure to satisfy the demands of followers'.[53] *Unravel* is a nice metaphor that suggests this image

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[50] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 373.
[51] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 28; Vogel cites Anderson on this idea.
[52] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xiv.
[53] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xviii.

has an independent reality, independent of Vogel's fabrication. Vogel never suggests the image is his own *invention*, but instead through the trope implies that it is a complex ontological knot that the psychobiographer must merely untie.

Vogel sees in the story of Nephi's obtaining the plates of brass from Laban a parallel between Smith himself and Nephi. Just as Nephi assumes a disguise to acquire the records, Smith too justifies his actions in 'putting on a false identity' in order to fulfill God's will.[54] Nephi breaks through this disguise to Zoram to assure his brothers of his identity and this 'reflects Smith's belief that one could take on the role of a prophet' and yet feel truthful in a disguise. The 'autobiographical tone' of Nephi's story reveals the character as Smith's alter ego.[55] Almost every time Vogel uses this metaphor of dressing in a certain role he reveals his ideological commitments by equating such an action with deception: 'Like the faith healer who uses confederates and deception to create a faith-promoting atmosphere in which "true" healing miracles can occur, Smith assumed the role of prophet, produced the Book of Mormon, and issued revelations to create a setting in which conversion experiences could take place'.[56]

Tropes of storytelling or literary analysis are continuous with the metaphors about roles and personas. Since biographers are storytellers also, it might prove psychologically helpful to apply his own notions about narratives to his biography of Joseph Smith. I have suggested that Vogel uses his psychological images in order to assume the role of the novelist. This psychologizing of the psychobiographer seems valid because Vogel's close identification with Smith suggests the latter is Vogel's own alter ego. After finding a number of alter egos for Smith in the Book of Mormon, Vogel singles out Mormon as the alter ego 'closest to Smith's own self-perception'.[57] Using Mormon as his own voice in the story, allowed 'flexibility' to interject, to omit material, to pause and develop some passages. 'The effect was much like having an omniscient third-person narrator in a novel'.[58] Vogel seems to be working out his own psychological struggles in his psychobiography of Joseph Smith as he projects his own ideas on the character he is writing about.

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[54] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.
[55] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.
[56] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xxi.
[57] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 118.
[58] Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 118.

DONNA HILL'S *JOSEPH SMITH: THE FIRST MORMON*

Mormon historians aren't the only ones who like to use the metaphor of middle ground to support their own position. Historians of all kinds like to say there are extremists to my right and radicals to my left, but I stand here in the moderate middle, in the center of the golden mean.

Donna Hill uses such spatial and landscape metaphors and is helped in this moderate middle by trying to avoid the most controversial issues in Mormon history. Hill wants to deflect discussion from issues of Book of Mormon historicity and the existence of plates because, as she states in her preface, 'to those questions there can be no answer that will satisfy everyone, and prolonged debate over them has, until lately, diverted attention from the important social and religious forces to which Joseph was responding and to which he contributed'.[59]

In her interpretation of Smith, Hill arrays interpretations along a continuum between humility and pride, saint and charlatan.[60] She then locates interpretations along this continuum. Similarly Hill arranges views of Book of Mormon origins along a line from those who rejected Joseph Smith as author and as translator to believers in divine and ancient origins of the book such as Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery.[61] The simple, two-dimensional view of history Hill later complicates with a three dimensional metaphor when it comes to discussing the motives of Smith regarding polygamy. Hill notes that the prophet's commitment to 'establish polygamy was complex' and can't be contained by simple explanations about sexual drives, Emma's physical frailty, the Old Testament pattern of polygamy, Puritan prohibitions against extramarital sex, or other inadequate interpretations. 'Account must be taken also of his enormous capacity to love . . . . He interpreted the Lord's plan for the salvation of men as progression to the state of godhood in an eternal family union'.[62] The metaphor here is one of a complex, a web with various nodes, all of which need to be accounted for in their individuality and relationship. The metaphor is still spatial, but (unlike a continuum)

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[59] Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 103–104.
[60] Hill, *Joseph*, p. 9.
[61] Hill, *Joseph*, p. 103–104.
[62] Hill, *Joseph*, p. 343.

is three dimensional. Donna Hill's biography is squeamish, attempting to avoid controversy. Her spatial metaphors reflect that commitment.

ROBERT REMINI'S *JOSEPH SMITH*

Robert Remini's biography of Joseph Smith is much more concise and less developed than the other biographers of this subject. Because he is a historian who in this book resorts to one dominant metaphor, I prefer to at least mention his work. I believe all times are periods of transition, but Remini thinks the antebellum period was more transitional than most eras. Remini's book, unsurprisingly for a historian, asserts that to understand Joseph Smith one must understand the background from which he comes 'because he was influenced by the intellectual milieu of his time'.[63] The success of Mormonism largely comes down to the ability of Smith to reflect the 'social, political, and intellectual dynamism of the Jacksonian age'.[64] This dynamism is the major metaphor in Rimini's biography of Smith. Remini notes other massive changes occurring in antebellum America: romanticism in the shape of Transcendentalism,[65] religious transformations evident in the Second Great Awakening,[66] the expansion of democratic sentiments and institutions,[67] and communal experiments.[68] Remini notes just one element of the restoration that went against this American background—polygamy.[69] Remini cites several contemporary observers' claims that the entire Jacksonian period was a time of change, expansion, optimism, and growth and acquisitive scurrying: 'The age, agreed Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, "is full of excitement" and rapid change'.[70] Joseph Smith and his movement represent this ferment with radical challenges to church/state relations, migration across a continent, and new religious ideas.

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[63] Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* (New York: Viking, 2002), p. ix.

[64] Remini, *Joseph*, p. x.

[65] Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 4–5.

[66] Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 7–10.

[67] Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 75–81.

[68] Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 97–98.

[69] Remini, *Joseph*, p. 154.

[70] Remini, *Joseph*, p. 77.

CONCLUDING TROPES ABOUT LOOSE STRINGS

The historical discipline has recently returned to its historic and proper home—the humanities. The boundary between history and literature that historians have been patrolling so tirelessly for the past century has in recent years shifted dramatically, if one can find surveyors who can chart it at all; even if GPS units were to be used to mark the boundary, a metaphorical version of the uncertainty principle would apply: the more precise the historian attempts to be positive about the line, the more uncertain where to draw it. During the twentieth century historians have been telling us where the frontier is, but explorations by literary critics, philosophers, and historians have pointed to those lines as arbitrary maps on paper that don't reflect how historians construct their narratives. Now, after a hundred-year absence, literature has returned to history, unfurling her circus silks of metaphor and allegory, misprision and aporia, trace and sign, demanding that historians accept her mocking presence right at the heart of what they had once insisted was their own autonomous and truly scientific discipline.

The return of literature has plunged historical studies into an extended epistemological crisis. It has questioned our belief in a fixed and determinable past, compromised the possibility of historical representation, and undermined our ability to locate ourselves in time. The result of all this has been to reduce historical knowledge to a tissue of remnants and fabrications concealing, it is said, an essential absence.[71]

But history was always literary, even and especially during that time its practitioners mistakenly believed in objectivity; in detachment; in neutrality; in unbiased interpretation; in freedom from preconceptions, values, and ideologies; in reporting the past as it essentially was. Positivistic historians who still adhere to these notions warn that to accept the essential literariness of history is to descend into an abyss. History has always been in that abyss; these historians who warn us that exploring the essential literariness of writing historical stories just aren't aware that the abyss is not really a danger but just part of the inevitable rise and decline of the historiographical terrain (Keith Windshuttle has been the most straightforward about blaming the problems in contemporary historiography on literary theorists). This collapse of the border

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[71] David Harlan, 'Intellectual History and the Return of Literature', *American Historical Review*, 94, no. 3 (June 1989), p. 581.

between literature and history that has been taken for granted by historians for over a century has not sufficiently registered in the historical profession. 'Disciplines—history included—have boundaries. Scholars who are firmly within a discipline most often do not think about its boundaries. Instead, they feel its constraints as simply those of good scholarship generally'.[72] Since the linguistic turn, historiography has begun to examine the use of historians' language. If thought is inextricably entwined with the metaphorical resources of language, then historical tropes are essential in examining the rhetoric of history. Not only is it time for the neighboring disciplines of history and literature to establish diplomatic embassies in each other's capitals, it is also time to acknowledge that those border crossing points historians have assiduously maintained are continuously bypassed by the heavy traffic that crosses the frontier on multitudes of superhighways, primary roads, secondary arteries, bike paths, and pedestrian walkways in every account of the past.

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[72] Allan Megill, '"Grand Narrative" and the Discipline of History', *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 151.