Discoveries

Two Centuries of Poems by Mormon Women
To my husband, Cless Young,
a great supporter of Mormon women.

— SEH

To my mother, Joan,
a Mormon woman of faith and courage.

— SMB
Poetry

A rainbow with the hues of feeling lit;
    The opal’s heart of snow and fire wrought;
Rayed with the purest light which souls emit—
    The heavenly halo which transfigures thought.

—Josephine Spencer
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Beginning
Of the Beginning

Susan Elizabeth Howe

O Daughters, I will speak of excellent things. The opening of my lips shall be from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was.

When darkness was upon the face of the void, we were there. When there were no depths, we exploded against the bleakness of density.

We watched the gassy sweep of the galaxy, loved the forming sun for its light, the moon for its patience, the stars for their distance and immensity.

As Earth swirled in its sphere we were centripetal. As seas gathered together, we touched a finger to the face of the deep. As clouds meandered
into the sky, our cheeks moistened
in the mist. Bedrock settled
in our beds, and from us
soils learned to nourish.
We saw matter

organized—hills everlasting, fountains
of the deep. Matter inspirited
as flower, fish, bush, beast,
all bearing egg or seed.
These we gathered,

enfolding spheres of truth within
ourselves, prepared with wisdom,
the wisdom of God, the God of light,
the light of the daughter
and the dawn.
Blackberry

Penny Allen

Sucking darkness into swollen lobes,
It rides the cane over in its plumpness.
She wants it—enough to thread a careful hand
Through the thorns, etching a ragged red
Rivulet on the wrist and pricking tiny
Rubies where she wavers until her fingers
Lightly pluck it—thumb-pad pierced by a point
In the process. She pulls the berry back
Through close-woven briars; it stains startled
Fingers pinching at the pull of a thorny
Anchor. She plunks it into her wet mouth.
Delicious. More desirable than the first
Death she ate. Yet long after her tongue
Forgets the sweet, her throbbing thumb remembers
The pain, and still hungry, into the tangle
She flinches, sighing, “Oh, Eden, Eden.”
Woman

Lu Dalton

Woman is first to know sorrow and pain,
    Last to be paid for her labor,
First in self-sacrifice, last to obtain
    Justice, or even a favor.

First to greet lovingly man at his birth,
    Last to forsake him when dying,
First to make sunshine around his hearth,
    Last to lose heart and cease trying.

Last at the cross of her crucified Lord,
    First to behold him when risen,
First, to proclaim him to life restored,
    Bursting from death’s gloomy prison.

First to seek knowledge, the God-like prize,
    Last to gain credit for knowing,
First to call children a gift from the skies,
    Last to enjoy their bestowing.

First to fall under the censure of God,
    Last to receive a full pardon,
First to kiss meekly the chastening rod,
    Thrust from her beautiful garden.

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First to be sold for the wages of sin,
    Last to be sought and forgiven,
First in the scorn of her dear brother, man,
    Last in the kingdom of heaven.

So, a day cometh, a glorious day,
    Early perfection restoring—
Sin and its burdens shall be swept away,
    And love flow like rivers outpouring.

Then woman, who loves e’en thro’ sorrow and shame,
    The crown of a queen will be wearing,
And love, freed from lust, a divinely pure flame,
    Shall save our sad earth from despairing.

That latter-day work is already begun,
    The good from the evil to sever,
The Word has gone forth that when all is done,
    The last shall be first, forever.
Embryo

*Sally T. Taylor*

Creation.
Before it is, it moves.
Does it think as it
    turns its face?
Is its knee-jerk reflex?

What happens at these
    fibrillations?
Do teaspoon hands cup,
    and fingers feel each
    its own movement?

It is still just before
the exodus, when the water
turns to blood.

    Firstborn,
the angel of death
stands ready before dawn.

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A Lullaby in the New Year

*Linda Sillitoe*

One week is not too soon to learn a very early language; for your spine to be aware that a rocking chair means comfort and your wary nerves want sleep. Nothing will disappear, forsaking you to vast, fluorescent air your fists and feet can’t pummel. You shudder at my kiss, a random bother in your hair. I tell you this, my loud and little daughter, you have now all there is: familiar dark, a blanket’s wings without, warm milk within, balanced with your head in my hand’s cup in a second cradle of flesh and sound. We rock and still you rage. I kiss your hair again. All right, I whisper, accept, accept and sleep.
When I Was a Child