CREATING A PSEUDO-HISTORY: THE MYTH OF MORMONS, POLYGAMY, AND THE DANITES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FICTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project aims to explore the Mormon myth perpetuated in the nineteenth century by comparing and contrasting two fictional works that treat Mormonism as the enemy of evolved Christian society and traditional Victorian family values. The first is *Brigham Young's Daughter: A Most Thrilling Narrative of Her Escape From Utah, With Her Intended Husband, Their Pursuit by the Mormon Danites or Avenging Angels, Together with An Account of the Adventures and Perils of the Fugitives on the Prairies and While Crossing the Rocky Mountains, To Which is Added A Full Exposé of the Schemes of the Mormon Leaders to Defy and Defeat the U.S. Government in Its Attempts to Suppress the Horrible Practice of Polygamy in Utah.* The second is *A Study in Scarlet.* These works, created by two different authors from different national backgrounds (one American and one British), are written in two differing styles, and for differing purposes. However, the texts do share a common era as well as a moral conflict over Mormon polygamy as central to their plotlines and narrative development. The American text, written by Wesley Bradshaw in 1870, was created as political propaganda to support the legal campaign against Mormonism in the United States. As a result, it blurs the distinction between fact and fiction about Mormons and employs emotional images and language in an effort to incite public outrage against Mormon polygamy. The British text, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, utilized the

sensational topic of Mormonism not only to entertain his readers, but also as a way to launch his new detective series in a market over-saturated with crime fiction in an effort to turn a profit. Despite the differences between texts, each draws similar conclusions with regard to Mormons and Mormonism. This project will argue that these similarities reflect and contribute to the creation of a distinct Mormon myth, which, over time, evolved to form a pseudo-history of Mormons in popular culture.

To my ever-supportive parents, Scott and Cristie, who helped me through this process with patience and love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis project aims to explore the perpetuated Mormon myth in the nineteenth century by comparing and contrasting two fictional works that treat Mormonism as the enemy of evolved Christian society and traditional Victorian family values. The first is *Brigham Young's Daughter: A Most Thrilling Narrative of Her Escape From Utah, With Her Intended Husband, Their Pursuit by the Mormon Danites or Avenging Angels, Together with An Account of the Adventures and Perils of the Fugitives on the Prairies and While Crossing the Rocky Mountains, To Which is Added A Full Exposé of the Schemes of the Mormon Leaders to Defy and Defeat the U.S. Government in Its Attempts to Suppress the Horrible Practice of Polygamy in Utah.*[1] The second is *A Study in Scarlet.* These works, created by two different authors from different national backgrounds (one American and one British), are written in two differing styles, and for differing purposes. However, the texts do share a common era as well as a moral conflict over Mormon polygamy as central to their plotlines and narrative development. The American text, written by Wesley Bradshaw in 1870, was created as political

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[1] Hereafter, this text will be referred to by the truncated title *Brigham Young's Daughter*.

propaganda to support the legal campaign against Mormonism in the United States. As a result, it blurs the distinction between fact and fiction about Mormons and employs emotional images and language in an effort to incite public outrage against Mormon polygamy. The British text, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, utilized the sensational topic of Mormonism not only to entertain his readers, but also as a way to launch his new detective series in a market over-saturated with crime fiction in an effort to turn a profit. Despite the differences between texts, each draws similar conclusions with regard to Mormons and Mormonism. This project will argue that these similarities reflect and contribute to the creation of a distinct Mormon myth, which, over time, evolved to form a pseudo-history of Mormons in popular culture.

Modern opinions of particular historical events are often informed and conflated with literary works contemporary to the historical period in question. In this way, Mormonism reached mythic proportions in the nineteenth century, and beyond, through the fictional literature produced for popular consumption. Anti-Mormon fiction first began to develop in the 1850s with the plotlines of these early works proving formative for those that followed. These early stories typically "revolved around polygamy as female bondage, and the 'Avenging Angels' [or Danites] as terrorist minions of a despotic Brigham Young" (Givens 134-135). For the popular presses, "Exploiting these subjects provided all the eroticism and violence a voracious public appetite could demand" (Givens 135). The popular presses in the nineteenth century helped to create a Mormon myth born out of a combination of fictional texts and exaggerated newspaper articles. For this period, the Mormon myth centered around the idea that the Mormon people were the antithesis of moral Christian society, practicing polygamy (a degrading

enslavement of women) and silencing dissenters both inside and outside the church by dispatching the murderous Danites.

This project will use the phrase "Mormon myth" throughout on the one hand as a catchall term for standardized Mormon stereotypes, but also to communicate the cultural significance of Mormons as a fearful "other" in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, framing these notions of Mormons in the context of myth serves to communicate the ability for these exaggerated stereotypes of Mormons that occur in fiction to move beyond that fictional realm to create a believable, but certainly a pseudo, history. Indeed, Eric Csapo, in his book entitled *Theories of Mythology,* explains the cultural significance of myth as:

> Anything which is told, received, and transmitted in the conviction of its social importance. . . . The question of whether or not something is true or false is largely irrelevant to the question of whether or not it is a myth. Truth was never a sufficient condition for something being believed or repeated. It is much more relevant to consider the motive behind its transmission and reception. It if spreads because it is *thought* true, valid, important, or interesting for a given social group, then it is a myth.[2] (279)

A number of Mormon scholars, and particularly Mormon historians, argue that these pieces of anti-Mormon fiction are indeed pure fiction and, therefore, undeserving of academic study in many cases.[3] However, as Csapo explains, it is not a question of whether these representations are true or false. Rather, it is the fact that these ideas of Mormons exist at all in current popular culture and have survived beyond the context of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the exploration of the ideas these texts transmit is significant because it was a topic of importance and intense interest for the readership of

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[2] Emphasis not my own.

[3] For more information on this argument, see Gordon and Givens.

Bradshaw and Doyle.

Mormonism is a unique, quintessential, American-born religion that has held the attention and fascination of the public eye since its foundation in the early nineteenth century. Its very nature as a new theology that flourished in the realm of American religious freedom garnered national attention. Yet its practice of polygamy, anti-governmental sentiments, and some instances of violence against its opponents soon earned its followers the status of a foreign "other" within its own American culture. This contradictory status gave Mormonism a firm and negative place in the history of American religion. Religious scholar and historian Gordon S. Wood explains:

> Mormonism was undeniably the most original and persecuted religion of this period or of any period of American history. It defied as no other religion did both the orthodox culture and evangelical counter-culture. Yet at the same time it drew heavily on both these cultures . . . . Mormonism was both mystical and secular; restorationist and progressive; communitarian and individualistic; hierarchical and congregational; authoritarian and democratic; antinomian and Arminian; anti-clerical and priestly; revelatory and empirical; utopian and practical; ecumenical and nationalist. (379-380)

Mormonism is a religion and a culture both essentially part of American culture, but constantly in conflict with that same culture. It is simultaneously familiar and other, making it not only of interest to historians and religious scholars, but also to fiction writers and readers in both the nineteenth century and today. From its founding and through to the present day, Mormonism has made headlines and provided the basis for numerous fictional stories, particularly in the nineteenth century. Many of the anti-Mormon sentiments in the nineteenth century were perpetuated by the imagination of the popular press, including cheap novels and stories in newspapers. While the news reports had some initial basis in fact, the presses soon contributed to the creation of a distinct Mormon myth in the period surrounding the secret temple rites, practice of polygamy,

and the mysterious threat of the legendary Danite group.

Such stories about Mormonism were particularly rampant after the 1850s with the popularization of the six-penny novel and other inexpensive forms of written media. Indeed, Fawn Brodie notes in her biography of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, that he was "rash enough 'to found a new religion in the age of printing,'" which considerably affected the foundational years of Mormonism (Givens 107). But Smith not only formed a religion in the age of printing, but also in an age when the popular presses were shifting toward a new, increasingly sensational style of storytelling. According to Terryl Givens:

> Coinciding with the first thirty years of Mormonism's history, the new regime of journalism emphasized popular appeal, energetic writing and reporting, and a price that would put newspapers in the hands of every American citizen . . . . [And the] average cost of newspapers was six cents. (107)

Indeed, it was the affordability of newspapers in combination with a move toward sensationalism that allowed for the formation and perpetuation of a unique Mormon myth encompassing both the United States and Western Europe.

While it is easy to assume, and the idea has been posited, that these pieces of anti-Mormon fiction are, indeed, pure fiction and, therefore, undeserving of academic study in many cases, it was the exaggeration of small parts of Mormon history over time that resulted in the use of these fictional texts as authoritative accounts of Mormonism. Furthermore, it is what makes both the works themselves and the Mormon myth so enduring. Indeed, this standardized myth of the Mormons in fiction allows for the narratives to be categorized into two recognizable patterns. According to Givens, the first of these categories concerns the juxtaposition of Mormonism and "Oriental images" (107). However, the second category contains themes of coercion and bondage and was the basis of the more sensational and political works produced about the Mormons. For,

they typically combined images of captured women held against their will and forced into polygamous marriages on threat of death. These types of narratives made up a large portion of the propagandistic texts supporting the legal case against polygamy in the United States during the nineteenth century since they dealt most dramatically with the imagined terrors of polygamy in Utah. These types of narratives fed the burgeoning sensationalist presses and allowed for the creation of a distinct genre of anti-Mormon fiction.

As mentioned above, Mormonism was founded at a time when the popular press was not only experiencing an increase in readership. In America, it was undergoing a stylistic transformation as well. Quoting newspaperman James Gordon Bennett, who was the publisher of the *New York Herald* as well as the "founder of a new school of writing," Givens explains that in the nineteenth century the new aim of newspapers and the penny press generally was "not to instruct, but to startle" (107). Indeed, Bennett himself is quoted as saying, "My ambition is to make the newspaper press the great organ and pivot of government, society, commerce, finance, religion, and all human civilization" (Givens 107). This new tendency not only achieved Bennett's goal of startling his readership with sensational stories, but in America particularly, this allowed for anti-Mormon fiction to create a distinctive Mormon myth because "the proliferation of the printed word meant a corresponding proliferation of types, categories, and genres" (Givens 106). This propagation allowed ideas about Mormons to solidify in the popular imagination. Specifically, this cemented images of the controlling nature of the Mormon leadership, the degrading nature of polygamy for women, and the ever-present threat of the Danites.

Though these images are at best exaggerations of fact, their value cannot be

wholly dismissed because they ultimately reflect certain realities about public opinions of Mormonism both in the nineteenth century and even today. As Sarah B. Gordon explains, "As historians of Mormonism quite correctly point out . . . antipolygamy novels often had little basis in fact. But the fact that they were 'wrong' does not mean they were ineffective" (30). These novels and stories about Mormons were indeed effective in capturing the public imagination and in shaping a portion of American politics. As distinctly "other," Mormons could also be seen as a quasi-foreign invasion on Western Christian ideals, and, therefore, a threat in need of immediate attention.

However, the goal of this thesis project is not to address the issue of veracity in relation to Mormon stereotypes in the nineteenth century. Rather, it aims to explore the representations of Mormonism in nineteenth-century fiction (informed by the excellent scholarship on the subject by Givens and Gordon) by utilizing *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* as case studies in order to assess their relationship to prevailing stereotypes and anxieties of the period.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE TWO NARRATIVES

Bradshaw's *Brigham Young's Daughter* was written as a politically minded exposé to increase public awareness of the ongoing legal case against the practice of polygamy in the Utah Territory. The legal battle, which was raging at the time Bradshaw wrote the piece, was incredibly complex and will not be analyzed in depth in this essay.[4] As a result of the political battle, works of propaganda against Mormonism were not uncommon in nineteenth-century America. These works were created to inflame the public to action, and their authors "challenged legislators and jurists to create a legal system that mirrored the emotional and spiritual truths they insisted were the basis of all valid government" (Gordon 30). Therefore, the appeal of works like Bradshaw's was "far wider and more grounded in emotional logic of Americans' vision of religious liberty and the importance of marriage" (31). Indeed, the language and characters of *Brigham Young's Daughter* demonstrate this attitude Gordon describes. The work appeals to its audience on an emotional level in order to spark feelings of outrage, with the aim of inciting readers to political activism.

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[4] Gordon explores the topic at length in her book, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America.*

A Brief Summary of *Brigham Young's Daughter*

Brigham Young's Daughter begins with a fictional letter from the author, Bradshaw, to a character called "The Publisher," which simultaneously establishes the author as a character in his own work, placing the action of the story in reality rather than in a fictional world, thus creating a false idea of the veracity of the narrative to come. From this introduction, the character of the author relates his experience with the legal debate over Mormonism and polygamy in the newspapers and in daily conversations he has with his acquaintances and friends. Bradshaw also discusses his meeting with a young couple named John and Ella Harris from Utah who wish to tell their story of escape to him. Their hope is that he will take down their tale and have it published in order to raise awareness of the "horrible" state of affairs in Utah (22).

Mr. and Mrs. Harris explain to Bradshaw that they have travelled a long way to seek his aid:

> [We] have suffered such terrible hardships and been exposed to such persecutions, with the peril of death hanging over us continually in Salt Lake City, that we have deemed it not only proper, but our duty to lay some startling facts before the community in regard to our experience there . . . . Both she and I consider it a duty we owe to the morality of society in the United States to make this public . . . . All we ask is, that you use your best ability and energy to have it sown broadcast over the land, and so let the people know what a terrible monster has grown to such strength as to absolutely defy the government to enforce its laws. (22-23)

The couple appeal to Bradshaw's sense of morality and make the argument that there is, in fact, an immediate need to oppose Mormon polygamy and Mormonism more generally on a political as well as a social level. They explain this opposition as necessary for the preservation of the Union itself through upholding good, Christian morality in the United States and its surrounding territories. Furthermore, this comment serves to initiate the demonizing of Mormons as violent and immoral in the text. To this explanation by John

and Ella, Bradshaw replies that he will do all in his power to make their story known. After further discussion of the issue of polygamy in Utah as well as the dangers of living there as either a gentile or fence-sitting Mormon, John and Ella begin their tale in earnest.

John Harris begins by explaining that he was a convert to Mormonism and made his way to Utah with the hope of finding fortune and greater opportunity in the West. Though apprehensive about his conversion, John is initially impressed by the Mormon haven in the Salt Lake Valley. He observes that the snow-capped mountains his company had traveled through, "stood like a Heavenly wall between the City of the Saints and the busy, toiling, wicked world beyond the prairies across which we had come to the expected haven of rest" (28). After his arrival, he meets his future wife, Ella, who is the daughter of Brigham Young, the current church president and Mormon leader. Though Young takes a liking to Harris initially, he refuses to consent to Harris marrying Ella and bans John from seeing her. The reason given for Young's refusal is that the son of Heber C. Kimball, one of Young's closest advisors, says that he has had a revelation from God that he must take Ella as one of his plural wives. Despite Young's decision, John and Ella refuse to give up their courtship or plans for marriage. Instead, they seek to find a way around the impending nuptials of Ella and Kimball's son and discuss the potential necessity of leaving Utah as soon as possible.

The couple attempts to secretly escape from Utah on their own, but they are waylaid by a group of Avenging Angels (also called Danites) who were sent by Brigham Young to ensure that his daughter did not escape with Harris. After a brief struggle, the Avenging Angels grab Ella and drag her back to Young's residence. Undaunted, John enlists the help of his friend Mr. Stevens, who is a gentile living among the Mormons in

Salt Lake City. Once the two men rescue Ella from her captivity and prevent her murder at the hands of the Avenging Angels, she, John, and Mr. Stevens escape Utah at last. However, they are constantly plagued on their road east by these violent men sent after them by Young. While staying at a hotel along the way, Stevens has a run-in with some of the members of the group and is stabbed to death. He dies at the hotel after warning John and Ella of the danger of their present circumstances, and he employs a friend to assist them with the remainder of their journey. Following the tragic death of their friend, Ella and John arrive safely in Chicago, where they marry immediately. Once established, the couple arranges to have Stevens' body brought to their new home so they can give their dear friend a proper burial. After all that has transpired, they vow to tell their story in the hopes that it will raise awareness about the horrors of polygamy and the threat posed by religious tyranny in Utah.

Following the tale of John and Ella Harris, the work returns to Bradshaw. All characters disappear at this point, and the piece switches from fiction to fact. Bradshaw aims by this addendum to the text to bring awareness to a bill against polygamy that was put forth by a Mr. Cullom of Illinois.[5] Bradshaw writes that the bill was "emasculated" in the House of Representatives and proposes that it "would have cut the horrid cancer clean from the face of our land. But as it stands now, it is no more terrible to the Mormons than

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[5] Gordon describes the 1870 Cullom Bill as "a complex proposal of forty-one sections, including a hodge-podge of political and procedural measures, each one designed to eat away the ability of polygamists and their Church to find shelter in local government. The bill passed the House but failed the Senate" (273-274). Gordon also notes that tenets of the Cullom Bill were eventually incorporated in the Poland Act (1874), the Edmunds Act (1882), the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887), and the Cullom-Struble Bill (1890) (273-274).

a lion with his claws and teeth all pulled out" (71). Bradshaw explains that the argument against the bill by many was that it was "too rough" on the Mormons in Utah. He also remarks that legislators feared Mormons would incite a violent riot against any non-Mormons in the territory in revenge for the passage of the bill. Bradshaw chastises these legislators, telling them to:

> Go home to their wives and daughters and tell *them* . . . . Let them go to their constituents and tell them they were *afraid* to vote for Cullom's bill . . . . And when they have done this, let them brand themselves moral cowards, and give place to men, *men,* who will fear not to drive the ploughshare so deep through Utah, that no second furrow will be needed to destroy the monster, polygamy forever.[6] (71)

It is a vehement rebuke, and it exemplifies Bradshaw's consistent demonization of polygamy as monstrous and evil throughout the text. Simultaneously, Bradshaw makes use of such statements to call on the moral conscience of every American, particularly the men of voting age, to do their duty and oppose polygamy. He argues passionately that it is the duty of every American man as a sign of respect to the women in their own lives to rid the country of such an "evil" and degrading practice. Thus, *Brigham Young's Daughter* transcends the boundaries of a purely fictional narrative to become part of the propaganda campaign against the Mormons in America.

The propagandistic flare of *Brigham Young's Daughter* is strong throughout. When Bradshaw introduces the topic in his opening, he exclaims of polygamy, "How horrible! Can such a state of things exist in the United States? The boasted land of enlightenment! And in the nineteenth century" (22). Furthermore, in their introductory meeting with the character of Bradshaw, John and Ella make a strong appeal to Bradshaw

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[6] Emphases not my own.

to tell their story in an effort to raise awareness for the eradication of polygamy. John Harris makes his plea to Bradshaw, urging him to "Make it as strong as possible. Do not spare the vile cause of Mormonism. Show the people what an evil monster it is and how dreadfully it will some day make war upon the nation's life without it is crushed out *now,* at once and forever" (23).[7] Not only do John and Ella call for immediate action against polygamy and the Mormons, but they also classify the threat of Mormonism as having significant potential to grow even further out of control. Therefore, Mormons pose an immediate threat to the moral health of the nation. Thus, Bradshaw petitions the American people in a fictional narrative by bringing in current and historical events concerning Mormons, which serves to bolster the novel's emotional impact, rendering the piece an effective work of propaganda for the anti-Mormon cause.

Brigham Young's Daughter is indeed structured throughout to bring awareness to polygamy not only as a legal issue of the time, but as a moral issue affecting every American and, more broadly, every Christian. Bradshaw opens with a strongly worded call to the American public. He writes:

> Through the negligence of successive administrations the hydra-headed monster of Mormonism has grown to vast proportions and defiant spirit. And the moral communities of this land are now upon the eve of a most terrific struggle with the loathsome reptile – a struggle that can no longer be put off. (19)

Such an introduction makes a strong appeal to the morality and consciences of the American public by characterizing polygamy as a threat to the traditional family structure, Christian morality, and the American way of life generally. As part of establishing the immediacy of the Mormon threat, the narrative introduces strong

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[7] Emphasis not my own.

language against Mormonism. For example, the subtitle of the work reads: "A Full Exposure of the Schemes of the Mormon Leaders to Defy and Defeat the U.S. Government in its Attempts to Suppress the Horrible Practice of Polygamy in Utah" (title page). From the very title, the reader gleans a negative picture of Mormonism as a threat to the U.S. Government and a sense that the group as a whole is devious and immoral.

This strong language continues throughout the introduction of the story, with the narrator communicating that he "do[es] not think there is one iota of exaggeration in the picture, terrible as it is" (19). On the whole, the introduction calls on the American public to help eliminate polygamy in the Utah Territory. In a direct appeal, Bradshaw writes, "Let us not permit it longer! But, with a bold hand, tear from off the terrible thing its flimsy drapery of gauze and spangle, that all good people may behold its soul destroying depravity and drive it from off the earth forever" (19). While the work is certainly intended as sensational, the call to the people in this introduction comes across rather as genuine concern for the state of the country, which was fairly common in the period. After the fraught battle with antislavery legislation, polygamy came as the second major threat to family life and Christian morality in nineteenth-century America. The fact that the moral degradation of society was a central concern is reflected in both antipolygamy and antislavery literature and legislation – a topic explored at length by Gordon.

As another tactic of emotional appeal, Bradshaw frequently petitions the public on behalf of women in his text. However, he does not openly defend Mormon women or any who choose the polygamist lifestyle. He urges people to stop the potential spread of polygamy by pointing out that not doing so would eventually endanger non-Mormon women as well. Bradshaw also voices the fear, common at the time, of Mormon

abductions of non-Mormon women in order to increase the female population in Utah. Then, Bradshaw argues that if the country does not rid itself of polygamy, it is the same as not viewing the practice as a crime, which puts American women at the mercy of polygamist men directly. He states:

> If polygamy has ceased to be a crime, and become a virtue, then let our Executives turn loose a flood of clemency. Let General Grant and the Governors of all our States, hasten to unbar the cell door of every bigamist who is now expiating that worst of crimes, the deceiving of virtuous, loving, trusting women. (71)

This characterization of women forms the basis for Bradshaw's heroine, Ella Harris, highlighting the fear of such innocent creatures at the hands of such base and vile men and bringing it to the forefront of readers' imaginations.[8]

Furthermore, *Brigham Young's Daughter* reflects the early assumption by non-Mormons that women in polygamy were trapped, unwilling participants in need of rescue from national forces. This story reflects concern not just for Mormon women, but the potential effect on non-Mormon women if such a system was allowed to endure. As a character, Bradshaw exclaims that polygamy is "a crime that degrades woman to a level actually below the beasts of the field," and one that positions a woman as "the slave of lustful men rich enough to purchase her; the mere toy of base passion, to be cast aside the moment a newer and more attractive face is seen" (19). The introduction not only cries out for the American people, men in particular, to pity these women trapped in polygamy; but it also calls on them to acknowledge the importance of the women in their own lives,

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[8] Ella is described as "regular in feature and equally dignified as innocent – a face full of purity and affection, a face that would awaken true love in any honorable man's heart, and wild passion in another kind . . . . Such women as Mrs. Harris are indeed priceless treasures to the men on whom they bestow their love" (21).

the importance of women in the home, in religious and moral life, as well as the importance of maintaining traditional family structure. On this topic, Bradshaw states vehemently: "*The higher and holier we make the sphere of our mothers, wives and daughters, and the truer we men are to woman, the grander and nobler will be our destiny as a nation!"* (19).[9]

The links between respect for women, traditional family life, and national success are not unique to Bradshaw. During the nineteenth century, belief in a traditional, Victorian family structure was a key part of traditional Protestant belief, as was the belief that undermining it would undermine the very fabric of the nation. According to traditional American Protestant values at the time, women were the keepers of religion and morality in the home (Johnson & Wilentz 7). This belief came in opposition to other sects and preachers, like Mormon founder Joseph Smith and left-field preacher Robert Matthews, that patriarchal authority should be privileged both inside and outside the home (Johnson & Wilentz 3-13). Overall, Bradshaw's piece would seem to be an effective work of propaganda, especially due to its juxtaposition of a fictional narrative with current, now historical, commentary after the close of the Harris narrative. As a result, the reader can become easily confused when reading the work as to what is fact and what is fiction.

A Brief Summary of *A Study in Scarlet*

Unlike *Brigham Young's Daughter*, *A Study in Scarlet* uses the Mormons and the Utah Territory as the backdrop for the story, and the piece is structured rather as crime

[9] Emphasis not my own.

fiction than political propaganda. Instead of moral appeals to extinguish the practice of polygamy, as was the common mode in American anti-Mormon narratives like Bradshaw's, Doyle's choice of setting in *A Study in Scarlet* reflects the fact that the British public were aware of the Mormons and the debate over polygamy, which shows it was a sufficiently sensational topic to attract the attention of British readers. Rather than use his story as anti-Mormon propaganda, Doyle employs a Utah setting in order to attract attention to his newly created detective duo, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson. This is a useful tactic according to Rebecca Cornwall and Leonard J. Arrington, who found in their study of the period that "Fiction writers would not lean toward financially unprofitable, authentic studies." Rather, "they turned to more sensational and marketable approaches" (165). Therefore, in a market flooded with crime fiction, choosing such a sensational topic to form a story was a strategic and ultimately lucrative move for Doyle.

A Study in Scarlet does, however, feed from and into the Mormon myth solidified during the nineteenth century in a similar way to Bradshaw's work. Though Doyle did eventually visit Utah, it was not until later in his career. For *A Study in Scarlet,* he was entirely reliant upon what could be gleaned from the newspapers as well as other fictional pieces of the day. Therefore, despite the vast differences between the national contexts and the purposes for which both stories were written, Doyle's presentation of the Mormons and the elements of Mormon history and society he chooses to discuss in his work are very similar to Bradshaw's. Yet, because Doyle's piece was not intended to serve a political propaganda campaign against the Mormons, his attitude toward the group comes across as slightly more sympathetic than does Bradshaw's. However, both

authors ultimately paint the Mormons and Mormon culture as villainous. Indeed, in the case of *A Study in Scarlet,* the reader comes away with the sense that revenge is justifiable, to a certain extent, when it is committed against a person, or group, deserving of vigilante justice.

A Study in Scarlet is presented in two distinct parts. Part one takes place in London and is dedicated to the introduction of the characters Sherlock Holmes (along with his peculiar "science of deduction") and Dr. John Watson. This opening establishes their relationship as a crime-solving duo that builds up around their first case, the "Lauriston Gardens Mystery." Holmes and Watson are called to investigate the murder of a Mr. Enoch J. Drebber of Cleveland, Ohio, who has been found dead in the front room of an empty house at Number 3, Lauriston Gardens with no apparent cause of death. The scene is so grim and gruesome that the Inspector on the case, Lestrade, remarks, "This case will make a stir, sir . . . . It beats anything I have seen, and I am no chicken" (39). When Drebber's body is moved during the course of Holmes's investigation, a woman's wedding ring is discovered, as well as the word "Rache," which Holmes identifies as the German word for revenge, written in blood on the wall. Both discoveries soon becomes of utmost significance to the story behind Drebber's murder.[10]

After their investigation at Lauriston Gardens and after concluding that Drebber was poisoned, Holmes and Watson return to Baker Street, where an old woman, who claims the ring belongs to her daughter, visits them. However, on further inspection,

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[10] Among the other possessions found on Drebber's body at the scene, there is mention of a gold ring etched with a masonic device, linking Mormonism and secret societies more closely together as the story progresses. For the complete passage, see Doyle (41).

Holmes and Watson discover that she is not an old woman at all and has given them a false identity. They feel certain this episode is connected to their killer. They also discover that Drebber was not traveling in London alone, but was in the company of his secretary, a Mr. Joseph Stangerson, whom no one has seen since Drebber's murder. After two false leads followed by the police, Stangerson is found dead in a private hotel. When Lestrade arrives at Baker Street to tell Holmes and Watson that Stangerson has been found with a small box of pills, Holmes declares he knows who the murderer is, and in a terrific struggle, they arrest a cab driver that Holmes states is the murderer. The driver's name is given as a Mr. Jefferson Hope, former resident of the American West territories.

Part two of the story, titled "The Country of the Saints," is the account that Jefferson Hope gives of what led him to murder both Drebber and Stangerson. The tale begins with the meeting of the two lone survivors of a group of settlers trekking across the American plains. They meet with a troop of Mormon pioneers making the journey to Utah, led by Brigham Young. The two survivors, John Ferrier and his adopted daughter Lucy, after agreeing to convert to Mormonism in exchange for the Mormons' help, make their way to Utah with their rescuers, who begin to build a new civilization in the Salt Lake Valley. While John Ferrier upholds his promise to become a Mormon, he refuses to take part in practicing polygamy, which becomes a sore point of contention between himself and the leadership of the Mormon church. At this point in the narrative, Hope indicates that both Drebber and Stangerson came from prominent Mormon families with close ties to Brigham Young, informing the story to follow.

When John's daughter Lucy reaches a marriageable age, and is described as having grown into the "flower of Utah," she meets Jefferson Hope, who is described as a

young, rough westerner. At this time, she also catches the attention of both Enoch Drebber and Joseph Stangerson as a potential bride, though both men are revealed to have several wives already. While John Ferrier approves the match with Jefferson Hope, as he does not want to see his daughter married into polygamy, the fact that Hope is a gentile attracts the attention and chagrin of the Church elders. Hope proposes to Lucy, with the permission of her father, and she agrees to marry him once he returns from overseeing his silver mine project in Nevada. In his absence, however, Brigham Young comes to the Ferrier residence and gives Lucy and her father one month to choose between marrying either Drebber or Stangerson. Afraid his daughter will become trapped in a polygamous marriage, Ferrier sends word to Jefferson Hope about their predicament.

After a series of sinister warnings from Young's Avenging Angels (which include counting down the thirty days he had promised the Ferriers to make a decision), Jefferson Hope appears discreetly on their doorstep with a cunning plan for escaping Utah. While the group does make it a distance away from Utah, they are nevertheless pursued by the Avenging Angels. The three escapees stop for food and rest along the trail. Thinking they are safe, Hope departs momentarily to find food. But by the time he returns, his companions have disappeared. He finds a single grave marked as that of John Ferrier, but Lucy is nowhere to be found. Hope makes his way back to Salt Lake as quickly as possible to discover that Lucy has, in fact, been captured and is now married to Enoch Drebber. He also learns that it was Joseph Stangerson who shot and killed John Ferrier in the wilderness. Lucy takes ill and dies within a month of her shameful marriage. Bent on revenge, Hope takes Lucy's wedding ring before she is buried and sets off on his quest to avenge the wrongs done to John and Lucy Ferrier. For, by this time, Drebber and

Stangerson know they are the targets of Hope's plan for vengeance.

After tracking Drebber and Stangerson for twenty years, he finally locates them in London, where he takes his revenge for Lucy and John. However, Hope explains, his long journey for vengeance has resulted in an aortic aneurism, so he is certain he will not live much longer. Finishing the account of his life story for Holmes, Watson, and the policemen, Hope states, "That's the whole of my story, gentlemen. You may consider me to be a murderer; but I hold that I am just as much an officer of justice as you are" (138). The night of his arrest, Hope dies without facing trial for his crimes.

British Notions of Mormonism

Because *A Study in Scarlet* is the inaugural work of Doyle's series and introduces readers to the illustrious detective duo Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson, the Mormon aspect in the second part of the story is often overlooked in critiques of the piece. However, the Mormon aspect creates essential depth for the story that brings in both factual and fictional ideas about Mormon life in the Utah into the popular culture of nineteenth-century Britain. As scholar Michael W. Homer observes, "Mormonism in 1887 was a sensational topic and plural marriage was a shocking and titillating subject for most English Victorians" (180). Reflecting this sensationalism, the story was also published in the *New York Evening Journal* in January 1899 with the title: "Mormons; or the Curse of Utah," apparently in support of a campaign to prevent B.H. Roberts from receiving a seat in the United States House of Representatives (Homer 180). This illustrates a link between the power of fiction and its effects on popular culture in both Britain and the United States.

A Study in Scarlet was first made available to the public in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in November 1887 and began a new era in detective fiction (Greene 7). According to Hugh Greene, "Before the coming of Sherlock Holmes the Victorians had had to pass the time on their railway journeys with a stodgy, and now pretty well unreadable, succession of bogus police memoirs, mostly published as 'yellow-backs'" (10). *A Study in Scarlet* presented a more engaging and culturally relevant form of entertainment for the public, infused as it was with sensation, scandal, and drama. Indeed, Doyle seems "to have been attracted by the theme of revenge arising from the activities of American sects and secret societies" (Greene 10). He also picked up on the popular mood at the time; for when Doyle wrote and published *A Study in Scarlet,* the "British yellow press at the time was urging hanging for Mormon missionaries, who were widely believed to be kidnapping English servant-girls" (Cornwall 160). There were numerous such articles at that time in England, and Doyle would likely have encountered stories of Mormon activities in journals as well as in the popular press. By Cornwall and Arrington's count, the frequency at which pieces on Mormons appeared was "equivalent to *Atlantic, Harper's,* and *Saturday Review,* each printing Mormon pieces at least twice a year" (160). Furthermore, as far as Doyle's motivations for writing a story concerning Mormonism, Cornwall and Arrington conclude that "a lucrative market existed for Mormon stories, which appealed both to the reform-minded and the curious, the pious and the prurient," and also that "Victorian novelists dwelt on myths about the Mormons because the facts were simply too mundane" (165).

Conclusion

Because Mormonism occupied a place of both native and "other" in nineteenth-century American culture, it was a prime target for the new sensationalist tendencies of the presses of the period. Numerous authors capitalized either politically or financially, and possibly both, on the public appetite for stories about the mysterious religion and the people who practiced it, contributing to the formation of an identifiable Mormon myth on which future authors would come to rely and view as standard. In conjunction with the advent of the penny press rendering literature affordable and available on a massive scale, this resulted in an expansive proliferation of Mormon stereotypes in both the American and British presses. Given the differing national backgrounds, political motivations, and financial motivations behind Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Bradshaw's *Brigham Young's Daughter,* the fact that they do present strikingly similar fictional portrayals of Mormonism indicates that both pieces relied on the Mormon myth perpetuated by the popular press in the nineteenth century. Neither of the two authors in question had a firsthand experience with Mormonism; and aside from this, little factual information about the religion was readily available to the masses at the time. By comparing and contrasting the portrayals of Mormonism in both texts, a picture emerges of popular thought on the topic in the nineteenth century, which boils down to an apparent anxiety over the moral character of Mormon men, their practice of polygamy, and the threatening presence of the Danites, or Avenging Angels, in the pursuit of conformity to the religion.

CHAPTER III

REPRESENTATIONS OF MORMON AND NON-MORMON MEN

Doyle and Bradshaw tend to characterize converts to Mormonism in their narratives as, generally, ill educated, blindly obedient, animalistic, and even physically unattractive. Givens acknowledges this unflattering stereotype in both nineteenth-century history and fiction in his book, *The Viper on the Hearth,* noting that "One of the most prevalent of the many stereotypes of Mormon converts held that they were drawn from the dregs of American and European society" (53). Particularly in the case of Mormon men, they were not only classed as the "dregs" of society, but also as "failed men, foolish or even criminal" (Gordon 45-46). But most importantly for nineteenth-century society, these men were "steeped in crime" because they were "freed from the marital rules that protected women; and thus all other rules crumbled, too" (Gordon 45-46). Indeed, these narratives have a strong tendency to link polygamy with criminality and, furthermore, with the idea that Mormon communities in Utah suffered from rampant lawlessness. Both this criminality and lawlessness allowed for and was aided by unchecked violence and murder committed by the mysterious Danites. But not only were these men thought of as base and criminal, it was also assumed that these men could be easily steered toward obedience. This malleability, tendency toward crime, and a low level of intelligence

meant that these men were also particularly susceptible to falling in line with every whim and cause ordered by the corrupt but charismatic men of the Mormon Church.

Bradshaw and Doyle explain these qualities as highly valued and sought by the Mormon Elders in their converts as well as any non-Mormons living in the vicinity of a Mormon community. For example, John Harris tells the author in *Brigham Young's Daughter* that in Utah "if you are [a] good Mormon, blindly obedient to the despotic will and whim of rulers, there is contentment, there is happiness for you. If you are a Gentile, and do, as the Mormons say, *mind your own business,* you may get along pretty well" (22).[11] While this sentiment certainly comes across in both pieces, Bradshaw paints a considerably more one-sided picture of Mormon men generally when compared to Doyle.

Bradshaw's narrative largely focuses on delineating distinctions between Mormons and non-Mormons, and in the process emphasizes the negative characteristics of Mormon men. The text makes no concessions for any persecutions suffered by the Mormons and does not acknowledge their remarkable achievement of creating a thriving society in an unsettled territory. Bradshaw compares the moral character of the Mormons with those of non-Mormons in *Brigham Young's Daughter* by contrasting the flaws of the unnamed Danite members in the story and, especially, of President Brigham Young with the valor and virtuousness of John Harris and his friend Mr. Stevens. Doyle makes similar distinctions between Mormons and non-Mormons in *A Study in Scarlet,* primarily through comparisons between the story's chief villain, polygamist and Danite member Enoch Drebber, and its rough-hewn, gentile hero Jefferson Hope. In the text, Drebber

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[11] Emphasis not my own.

comes to represent the worst kind of Mormon man and is portrayed as far more animalistic, ill educated, unattractive, and particularly unfeeling toward women than any of Bradshaw's characters. Indeed, Drebber seems to represent all of the most negative stereotypes about Mormon polygamist men in the nineteenth century, which would likely have made him an especially odious character to Doyle's contemporary audience. Jefferson Hope, on the other hand, is represented as a stereotypical man of the American West in the nineteenth century. He is rough around the edges but an incredibly skilled survivalist who is loyal to those he loves and, most importantly, an orthodox and God-fearing man.

Despite the negative picture of Mormon men painted by Drebber, Doyle makes an effort to give credit where credit is due. Though it is apparent that Doyle does not agree with polygamy or the secretive nature of Mormon society, he applauds the tenacity of the Mormon people. "This is not the place to commemorate the trials and privations endured by the immigrant Mormons before they came to their final haven," Doyle writes. Then he continues:

> From the shores of the Mississippi to the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains they had struggled on with a constancy almost unparalleled in history. The savage man, and the savage beast, hunger, thirst, fatigue, and disease – every impediment which Nature could place in the way – had all been overcome with Anglo-Saxon tenacity. (94)

This is high praise considering the author himself was a proud Anglo-Saxon.[12] However,

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[12] This sentiment is not unprecedented in the period and mirrors Charles Dickens's assessment of the Mormon people when he visited an emigrant ship bound for America. He writes that the Mormon converts there were "the pick and flower of England" possessed of "so much beauty and so much strength and capacity for work

this praise does not stop Doyle, in a similar fashion to Bradshaw, from characterizing Mormon men as brutish in their ways, a condition that links to the practice of polygamy. While the approaches to their subject matter differ, both authors make a similar and perceptible division between the characteristics of the Mormon leadership, exemplified by Brigham Young, and the other men of the church in both texts.

Indeed, *Brigham Young's Daughter* explains the division explicitly:

> It is a startling, but never-the-less true fact, that the whole Mormon Community is made up of two parts. The leaders are men of great shrewdness, selfishness, cunning and ability, but without the slightest moral principle, viewed from the true stand point [sic] of religion. The followers or masses are peculiarly ignorant, and of exceedingly low moral natures, entirely without aspirations for anything high or noble, and are fully contented to live their lives congregated almost like animals. (24)

The leaders and their followers are presented as nearly the antithesis of each other and certainly the antithesis of a good, Christian man who would strive to live on a higher moral ground in honesty, charity, and virtue in all things. *A Study in Scarlet* implies these differences and distinctions as well, though they are not as precisely laid out as the statement above from *Brigham Young's Daughter.* While the purpose of painting leaders and followers in this way has several functions in the texts, it does at least seem to provide some measure of deniability for the actions of the Mormon converts. For example, if the leaders are cunning men who prey on the weak-minded in seeking out their converts, then those caught in the web of these men cannot be held entirely accountable for their actions. If they knew no better because of a lack of intelligence, the blame for any lack in morality and judgment following their conversion cannot be placed

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among them" (Givens 54). The work ethic of the people seems, at times, in fiction and in history, to be the one admirable quality everyone can agree that the Mormons possess.

entirely on the individual. Therefore, the converts become pitiable in the texts to some extent, softening the judgment of the reader in regard to the converts. It also serves to dispose the reader to judge the leaders as the only party entirely deserving of harsh retribution. This is likely the reason for the character of Brigham Young being presented in both narratives as almost entirely unsympathetic. The descriptions of Brigham Young and the Mormon leadership in the texts have the effect of inspiring readers to draw the conclusion that Brigham Young and his compatriots deserve punishment for their actions in both fiction and in reality.[13]

Brigham Young and the Presidency

Brigham Young's Daughter characterizes Brigham Young as harsh and unyielding, with no allowance for the hardships he and his followers suffered throughout the tumult of their relocation to Utah. The text seems to take issue with Young almost exclusively because of his role in polygamy. But it also comments unfavorably on Young's leadership style as well. For example, when Young will not sanction John and Ella's union, disobeying him is described as perilous to their well-being and, in John's case, likely fatal. For, "what Brigham Young says, is law both civil, military and divine in Utah, and Mormons would as soon think of opposing the will of Heaven itself as opposing the Great Head of their faith" (30). Young is given a God-like status among his own people, wielding immense and nearly total power. He governs his territory in civil matters and has military might at his disposal, thereby becoming an imposing and

[13] For a balanced view of Brigham Young, see John G. Turner's biography *Brigham Young, Pioneer Prophet.*

dangerous figure not only to his own people, but also to those outside the religious community.[14] Young flouts the American division between the affairs of church and state, or territorial governance, and keeps his people enslaved to his influence by doing so. Beyond descriptions of his spiritual and earthly powers and influence, however, Young is also described as obstinate and even cruel toward those beneath him, particularly women. "When he makes up his mind," Ella explains to John, "you might as well attempt to turn the sun from its course" (30).

Not only is Young unyielding, he also has a "domineering spirit" and is prone to violent outbursts. For example, when Ella defies Young and continues her relationship with John Harris against his wishes, Young locks her in a room with two of her "mothers" standing in as her jailers.[15] Ella, however, overpowers these "two sour faced women" and temporarily escapes her prison in an attempt to warn John that Young has sent the Danites to eliminate him (36). She does not make it very far from the house before she is "seized in a grip of iron and stopped" by Young (36). To illustrate Young's cruelty toward women, even toward his own daughter, Bradshaw writes, "Looking up she beheld her father, who it was had thus arrested her flight. She did not quail before his angry look . . . . [Young] tightened his grasp on her arm till she groaned with the pain it

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[14] For a sense of the popular view of Young in the period, Stanley P. Hirshson's biography of Young, *The Lion of the Lord,* is based heavily on nineteenth-century newspaper sources and describes Young as "a colonizer of vast areas of the West, the Yankee-Prophet of God, the Moses of the modern children of Israel, the religious imperialist bent upon conquering the world" (3).

[15] These women are noted to be two of the first wives of Young in the text and are particularly hostile and cruel to Ella because she is the daughter of a wife Young favored over them. Bradshaw further explains that this was the sad result of polygamous unions for women in that they often turned on each other and the children of other wives out of the frustration felt at their home lives (35-36).

gave her" (36). He then drags her along to a different house where he shuts her up again with her two mothers with the parting warning, "Now then, learn to submit. You shall die ere you shall cross my path" (37). This is a defining moment in Bradshaw's text not only for showing Young as generally cruel and even murderous, but also linking male domination of and vindictiveness toward women with polygamy. Here, Bradshaw illustrates for his readers through Young's character the baseness and physically abusive nature of Mormon men, who, because of polygamy, feel a sense of entitlement to treat women poorly and even as disposable objects if they should prove uncooperative in any demand made of them.

Unlike *Brigham Young's Daughter*, however, *A Study in Scarlet* does not solely characterize Brigham Young in negative ways, though his portrait is far from favorable in the text. While Young is described as a harsh leader in some instances, the text implies this is due more to his religious zealousness rather than inherent cruelty or a distinct lack of empathy. Rather, Doyle's description of Young is an effective, if brutish, "Chief." Above all, *A Study in Scarlet* emphasizes Young's God-like status among his own people as his defining characteristic. When John and Lucy Ferrier first meet the Mormons on the Alkali Plain after their own group has perished in the westward journey, they are taken to Young's wagon, "which was conspicuous for its great size and for the gaudiness and smartness of its appearance" (92). The wagon is so grand and important that "six horses were yoked to it, whereas the others were furnished with two, or, at most, four a-piece," indicating the superior status if, perhaps, an excessive demonstration of wealth and prestige of its owner (92). When the Ferriers at last come face-to-face with Young, they meet "a man who could not have been more than thirty years of age, but whose massive

head and resolute expression marked him as a leader" (92). A leader, the text says, but there is no indication that Young possesses the capabilities of a spiritual leader, only that he was the leader the Mormons required at such a time when the church members faced persecution in the United States, and escaping the country altogether to form a new society seemed the only option for the Mormons.

While Young may not have come across as a typical, charismatic, spiritual leader (as the first Mormon prophet Joseph Smith is described), he believed fiercely in his adopted religion and was singularly concerned with any potential degradation of his flock.[16] In *A Study in Scarlet,* Young explains to John Ferrier that he and his daughter will be allowed to accompany the Mormons to their new home only if he agrees to meet certain conditions. "'If we take you with us,' he said, in solemn words, 'it can only be as believers in our own creed. We shall have no wolves in our fold. Better far that your bones should bleach in this wilderness than that you should prove to be that little speck of decay which in time corrupts the whole fruit'" (92). Young will not tolerate further threats to his people for any reason, and this attitude pervades the narrative as an integral element of Young's character. Furthermore, particularly in *A Study in Scarlet,* Young's attitude defines the harsh measures taken in governing the church and the Utah Territory. For, he believes that his function was to protect his people from both outside threats and internal dissent, both of which have the real potential to corrupt the entire organization and threaten the survival of the religion and the newly-settled territory. Specifically, Young's attitude seems to stem from the persecution suffered by the Mormons in

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[16] For more on the leadership styles and charisma of both Smith and Young, see Turner.

Missouri, which *A Study in Scarlet* alludes to at the opening of the second chapter.

In his story, Doyle praises Young's ability as a leader to a certain extent, though he also grants Young the dubiously complimentary title of "Chief." Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Doyle writes, "Young speedily proved himself to be a skilful [sic] administrator as well as a resolute chief. Maps were drawn and charts prepared, in which the future city was sketched out" (94). Here, the narrative is highly complimentary in its assessment of Young and gives him full credit not only for safely transporting a large group of people across treacherous and unfamiliar terrain, but also for the ability to successfully create a prosperous city out of nothing, which is no mean feat to be sure.

However, once polygamy is involved, the picture of Young becomes much less flattering in *A Study in Scarlet*. When Young approaches John Ferrier about his failure to take on multiple wives, the exchange is less than cordial. "Brother Ferrier," Young says, "The true believers have been good friends to you. We picked you up when you were starving in the desert, we shared our food with you, led you safe to the Chosen Valley, gave you a goodly share of land, and allowed you to wax rich under our protection. Is not this so?" (104). When Ferrier responds that this is indeed the case, Young chastises him for not embracing the Mormon religion as fully as he promised. Ferrier replies that he has conformed by giving money to the "common fund" and has been in attendance at Mormon temple ceremonies as was expected of him. However, Young argues that Ferrier has refused to embrace the religion solely based on the latter's lack of wives. "Where are your wives?" Young questions Ferrier. "Call them in, that I may greet them" (104). Though Ferrier defends himself by citing a lack of women in the territory and men with "better claims" than he had to multiple wives, this is nevertheless the point of serious

contention between Ferrier and Young. The exchange between the two men illustrates that Young was not merely overly concerned with polygamy and having a large number of wives for himself, but that he views the practice as the distinguishing characteristic of a true, and thereby trustworthy, Mormon man. In other words, if one refuses to take on polygamy, though he follows every other facet of Mormonism, he cannot be considered a true member of the faith. Polygamy, then, becomes the defining characteristic of Mormonism in this context, regardless of other doctrines and principles.

While *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* agree on certain characteristics of Mormon men compared to gentile men, for the purposes of each text, the non-Mormon hero and their Mormon antagonists differ radically. In the case of Bradshaw's text, Mormon men who are not involved in the upper level of the church hierarchy are characterized as unintelligent and even animalistic. For example, John Harris describes the Mormon converts inhabiting Utah as "dull, sluggish people devoid of every high or ennobling quality of mind, and possessed only of avarice and animal passion" (29). The Mormon leadership, however, is contrasted with this portrayal as, "rulers [who] were keen witted unscrupulous men who used the masses merely as pieces of excellently combined machinery to further their own selfish ends and passions" (29). Where the general Mormon populace is classed as inherently base creatures and the leadership as cunning and selfish, John Harris stands as a shining contrast to them all. "Mr. Harris," the narrative details, "was a tall, fine looking gentleman whose countenance was replete with intelligence and manly firmness and resolution (21). Furthermore, the narrative notes that Harris was a talented young man, both intelligent and smart in business, who was sought out by Brigham Young to utilize those talents to

further the church's own business (29). But, if Harris does not fit the Mormon stereotype, how then could such an upstanding young man fall prey to the persuasions of Mormons missionaries?

According to Gordon, the notion that unsuspecting, upstanding Americans had the potential to be swayed by the promise of riches if they joined the church and journeyed to Utah was a common fear in the nineteenth century. She explains that "Novelists depicted converts lured by promises of wealth as being exploited by the polygamous Mormon elite" (46). Thus, the character of Harris plays into this fear and ultimately demonstrates that a strong moral character, which he possesses, cannot be bent to the corrupt machinations of the Mormons long-term. Furthermore, the contrasting descriptions of Harris and Mormon men create a distinct binary between Mormons and non-Mormons and separate out the Mormon leadership as a special brand of cunning swindlers. These characterizations underline Bradshaw's overall assessment of Mormon men as wholly contrary to decent, Christian, American society.

Similarly, *A Study in Scarlet* presents Jefferson Hope and Enoch Drebber as representative of Mormon men and non-Mormon men of the American West.[17] However, because Hope is the sole character able to enact justice on the Mormons in the form of Drebber and Stangerson's murders and is a product of the wild American West, his description differs little from Drebber's overall. Such overlaps in descriptions support the

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[17] The distinction of non-Mormon men in the American West versus the American East is significant between these texts. Where John Harris represents ideals of the Eastern, and more civilized, part of the U.S., Hope's character is inherently different from Harris's because he is a product of the "Wild West" and, therefore, unavoidably rough around the edges.

idea that it takes a hunter to track down and neutralize a fellow hunter or, in the context of Mormonism, it takes a skilled hunter with a righteous cause to track down and exact justice upon an Avenging Angel. Indeed, there are aspects of *Study in Scarlet,* like Hope's mission of revenge, that match the stereotypical notions of the American West in fiction. Jay Monaghan writes that the men of the American West "seem romantic as the shining knights of Tennyson molded out of mediaeval brutes in armor. In the fiction of this idyllic West, virtue always triumphs and meanness is shot down for being too slow on the draw" (94).[18] Indeed, Hope's heroics in the story to save Lucy and her father and then to avenge their deaths fit this pattern Monaghan describes. Hope rides in like a knight armed with an extensive knowledge of Western life and terrain, bent on righting the wrongs done against the Ferriers at the hands of the Mormons. He is loyal, dedicated, and, above all, virtuous, especially when compared to Drebber. Therefore, it is inevitable that Hope's virtue triumphs and overcomes Drebber's meanness. For this reason, sympathy is directed toward Jefferson Hope in the narrative, which glosses over, to a certain extent, the fact that Hope is a murderer twice over.

In contrast, Hope's Mormon adversaries, despite ending as murder victims, garner little sympathy, especially in the case of Enoch Drebber. Drebber, identified as a member of the group of Avenging Angels in Utah, is characterized as a hunter (as are the other members of the group) with a look and manner tending toward animalistic. This description of Drebber comes from Dr. Watson, who notes that Drebber has an "ape-like

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[18] Monaghan was a historian who wrote a number of books on the American Civil War and was a consultant at the Wyles Collection of Lincolnonia at the University of California Santa Barbara. This comment on the West in fiction comes from a 1953 speech given at a historical conference in Los Angeles.

appearance" with a "low forehead, blunt nose, and prognathous jaw" (39). While Bradshaw describes the appearance of Mormon men in similar ways, Doyle is considerably more blunt in his depiction, stating that Drebber, and by extension all Mormon men, suffer from animal natures and "baboon-like countenance[s]" in a period where genteel refinement was highly prized in men by Victorian society.

Drebber is also described by his London landlady, Madame Charpentier, as "coarse in his habits and brutish in his ways," with his conduct toward women pronounced as abhorrent (67). "His manners towards the maid-servants," Madame Charpentier states, "were disgustingly free and familiar" (67). He also shows disrespect toward her daughter when "On one occasion he actually seized her in his arms and embraced her – an outrage which caused his own secretary to reproach him for his unmanly conduct" (67). This episode with Madame Charpentier's daughter, Alice, is certainly meant to allude to the polygamous lifestyle seeping its way into Drebber's character, causing his lewd and disrespectful behavior. On the whole, he is described as the antithesis of the ideal Victorian man valued in the period, especially in England. Furthermore, he is presented as a particularly un-Christian man, especially when compared to Jefferson Hope.

For example, Drebber is often said to be incredibly drunk early in the day. Describing his state for the course of his stay at her boarding house, Madame Charptentier tells the police that "The very night of his arrival he became very much the worse for drink, and, indeed, after twelve o'clock in the day he could hardly ever be said to be sober" (67). Not only is he careless, aggressive towards women, drunk, and a general brute, but Watson also describes him as possessing an inherently sinister nature.

Indeed, when Watson first encounters Drebber's body, he notes that on "his rigid face there stood an expression of horror, and, as it seemed to me, of hatred, such as I have never seen upon human features" (39). Then later in the text, Watson has nightmares about seeing Drebber's body and remarks:

> So sinister was the impression which that face had produced in me that I found it difficult to feel anything but gratitude for him who had removed its owner from the world. If ever human features bespoke vice of the most malignant type, they were certainly those of Enoch J. Drebber. (53)

Indeed, it is this description from Watson that begins to sway the reader toward sympathy to the murderer, Jefferson Hope. When combined with all the other descriptions of Drebber found in the text from various characters, he comes across as a particularly unsympathetic murder victim, a feeling that intensifies for those in the story when they discover that Drebber was formerly a Mormon engaged in polygamy. With this detail, all Drebber's characteristics combine to paint a decidedly unflattering picture of Mormon men generally.

Jefferson Hope, on the other hand, is presented as the stereotypical man of the American West, meaning he aims to live a good, honest life but is undeniably rough around the edges, given the untamed territory in which he resides. Also along this line, Hope is an adventurer who "had been a pioneer in California, and could narrate many a strange tale of fortunes made and fortunes lost in those wild, halcyon days. He had been a scout, too, and a trapper, a silver explorer, and a ranch-man" (99-100). For these reasons, Doyle describes Hope as a "tall, savage-looking young fellow, mounted on a powerful roan horse, and clad in the rough dress of a hunter, with a long rifle slung over his shoulders," with a "dark" and "fierce" face (98). Though his exterior comes across as uncivilized, what truly defines Jefferson Hope is his capacity for a depth of feeling and

his fierce loyalty to those he cares for. This side of Hope is shown after he first meets and falls in love with Lucy Ferrier, who is "frank and wholesome as the Sierra breezes" and, therefore, an ideal woman to stir the affections of a rough adventurer, a *true* man, like Hope (99). Indeed, after their first meeting, Lucy "had stirred his volcanic, untamed heart to its depths" and ignited in his heart a love that was "not the sudden, changeable fancy of a boy, but rather that wild, fierce passion of a man of strong will and imperious temper" (99). But not only is Hope capable of great feeling and loyalty, he is also, according to John Ferrier, "a likely lad, and he's a Christian" (106).

While Hope does have rough tendencies and an uncivilized appearance, it is more owing to his status as a true man of the American West than any potential fault in his character. He is savage because it is the nature of adventuring on the American frontier, but he does not share the "ape-like" features assigned to Enoch Drebber. Though Hope is described as a hunter, his hunting falls, initially at least, under the category of skilled survivalist rather than an indiscriminate killer, as is the case with Drebber and the other Avenging Angels. Above all, however, it is his dedication to Lucy and her father that makes the clearest distinction between Hope and Drebber. While Drebber has seven wives, not including his marriage to Lucy, and is notably disrespectful towards women generally, Hope is the picture of monogamous devotion and loyalty. While he cannot save her from her marriage to Drebber, he arrives at Lucy's funeral and removes her wedding ring as an outward sign of his rejection of her marriage. He then spends the rest of his life devoted to avenging Lucy's dishonor and the murder of her father in order to bring justice to two people who received none at the hands of the Mormons.

Life in a Mormon Community

Both authors spend a considerable amount of time painting the picture of Mormon communities as theocratic, tyrannous societies requiring every citizen, whether a member of the Church or not, to show support to the Church and its presidency while voicing no dissent or personal opinions. Both authors even comment on the shocking restriction of freedoms in Utah that were so prized by American society at the time. Indeed, John Harris explains, "In Salt Lake City, or in any of its [Utah's] dependent towns or villages wherever Mormon Rule is supreme, a man dare not say the first word against the Mormon law or belief. If he does, his life is not worth a moment's purchase" (Bradshaw 23). All persons, not just members, were essentially prohibited from speaking their minds on a subject if it ran contrary to the opinions of the Church. Indeed, the lack of freedom in Salt Lake disgusts John Ferrier. "I don't care about knuckling under to any man," Ferrier exclaims to his daughter Lucy, "as these folk do to their darned Prophet. I'm a free-born American, and its [sic] all new to me. Guess I'm too old to learn" (106).

Ferrier's comment is interesting to note here. It could be seen as an implication that true Americans, born and raised in the United States proper, have an acute sense of their freedoms and would have to be taught over an expanse of time to live without them. While it would matter less to the younger generation of Mormon members and converts, this would directly affect an assessment of the men of Ferrier's age, which includes every man of the Church presidency. These men, like Ferrier, would have to learn to live with their natural-born freedoms restricted; and perhaps those who learned to do it, like Young and his posse, were never *true* Americans to begin with. For, a true American could never fully submit to such a restrictive society or be party to the restriction of the freedom of

others.

While the obvious contradiction to this argument is that the Mormons left the United States to avoid the restriction of their own freedoms, the authors, particularly Bradshaw, do not seem to view Mormonism as a legitimate religion deserving of the protection of the right to freely worship in the United States. As Bradshaw describes it, Mormonism is a "moral leprosy" wrapped up in "a cloak of religious forms and false piety" (19). Rather, *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* view Mormonism as a secretive, deviant cult of criminals who wrap their lifestyle with the outer trappings of a religion in order to disguise their inner workings and sinister intentions. Interestingly, however, in both texts, this opinion manifests almost exclusively in relation to polygamy. This is certainly the heart of the issue for both authors, and without which neither might have taken notice of the Mormons as a subject for their fictional works at all. Indeed, the issue of polygamy is dealt with at length by both texts and will receive separate treatment in the following chapter.

Due to the governing style in Utah as exclusively Mormon, both texts demonstrate a fear of violent retribution for any perceived slight against the Church. As John Harris explains, "if being a gentile, you so far forget . . . [the] minding of your own business, as to even utter words of objection to the abominable practice of polygamy, or if you criticize any action of the rulers, you are in constant tribulation and hot water" (Bradshaw 22). But this anxiety was not exclusive to non-Mormons. Indeed, members of the Mormon Church had almost more to fear from expressing an adverse opinion. According to the texts. "If you are a Mormon and depart in one iota from the dictums or teachings of these rulers; or if you apostatize, Heaven help you! For you are then the

constant victim of all who are faithful; your life becomes hell upon earth" (Bradshaw 22).

Because Utah was separate from the United States and had its own government out of federal control for many years, a perception of corruption in the governing of Utah grew out of the idea that Mormons occupied all official offices in support of the Mormon agenda. Thus, it left little room for any non-Mormon voices of the Utah community to be heard in local politics. As John Harris describes of Utah governance, "There is no redress, no justice for a Gentile in Utah; for the civil laws even of the United States are administered by officers, every one of whom is a Mormon." (23). Indeed, the idea of justice and the fair meting out of justice is a dominant concern in both texts. In fact, it is the primary motivation for Jefferson Hope.

Conclusion

While the characterizations of Mormons in *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* are a product of the literary and cultural environments of their time, in the case of Bradshaw's text, these descriptions of Mormons then become justification for annihilating the practice of polygamy and curbing the practice of Mormonism in the United States. For, as Gordon points out, "By claiming that men who converted to Mormonism were already weak or even criminal, antipolygamist novelists implied that their faith did not deserve the legal or political deference accorded to most men" (46). If these men are not upstanding citizens, but are the dregs of society, the criminally minded, and the socially outcast, then they exist in a state contrary to the American laws and ideals. Therefore, they do not qualify for the full protection of their rights from the American government expected by upstanding, law-abiding American citizens.

CHAPTER IV

MORMON POLYGAMY: TEXTUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND POPULAR FASCINATION

According to a PEW Research Center survey conducted in 2012, 62% of Mormons in the United States believe that other Americans generally know either "not too much" or "nothing" about Mormonism. Furthermore, only 51% of the general American public polled considered Mormonism a Christian religion at all. While the general public might not know specifics about Mormonism, if they know anything about it, they know Mormonism's history with polygamy ("Mormons in America").[19] While Mormon scholar Max Mueller argues that this is due in large part to Jon Krakauer's widely known book, *Under the Banner of Heaven,* the practice of polygamy sticks out as an odd, potentially deviant, and specifically anti-Christian practice even today. Even Mormons themselves, when polled by the PEW Center, have strong feelings against polygamy today. For example, 86% of Mormons polled in the survey responded that they believe polygamy to be "morally wrong." To put this in perspective, this percentage is

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[19] The religion's founder, Prophet Joseph Smith Junior, established the practice of polygamy in Mormonism in 1843. However, polygamy is thought to have been practiced in secret by Smith and some of his close advisors as early as 1831. The first formally announced and documented plural marriage was that of Joseph Smith and Louisa Beaman in 1841 (Bowman 80-84).

listed alongside 79% who view fornication as morally wrong, 74% believing abortion to be morally wrong, and 54% who view drinking alcohol as morally wrong ("Mormons in America"). For Mormons and non-Mormons alike, the religion seems inseparable from its early practice of polygamy. While there is certainly a strong feeling against polygamy today, during the nineteenth century, Mormon polygamy became a national, political, and moral issue sparking new legislation on marriage and more specifically defining the bounds of constitutional protection of religious practices in the United States.

By the 1830s, American culture had been dominated by the tenets of evangelical Protestantism. Indeed, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote at the time that the United States "had become the most thoroughly Christian nation in the world" (Wood 360). To put this in context, in 1830 alone, Charles G. Finney launched a religious revival in New York, the Shakers reached a peak in their membership in the United States, Robert Matthews (also called the Prophet Matthias) had a revelation predicting an immediate end to the world, Alexander Campbell left the Baptists and began publishing the *Millennial Harbinger* (which preceded his creating the Disciples of Christ), and Joseph Smith published the *Book of Mormon* (Wood 360). However, with numerous religious groups forming and evangelical fever spreading across the U.S., this Second Great Awakening was not just a religious movement. According to Gordon S. Wood, the creation of new religions in this period was a response to the political alterations in America during the period between the American Revolution and the Jacksonian Age (361). Among this culture of revivalism, millennialism, and democratic change, there also came a solidification of ideals of family as well ideas of what it meant to be a true, American Christian.

For example, the Finneyites (a religious movement begun by Charles G. Finney in

the period) began a revolution of home life that abandoned the strict patriarchal rule of the husband and father to incorporate and even default to the influence of the wife and mother of a household in spiritual matters. According to Johnson and Wilentz, "Finneyite households became the models for what would eventually emerge as American Victorian domesticity" (7-8). Drawn from the British Victorian notions of family life, this emphasis on wives as the spiritual leaders of their families (understanding a faithful, monogamous marriage as the basis for this family) created tension with sects like Mormonism that valued patriarchal authority in both family and spiritual matters.[20]

Furthermore, this emergence of American Victorian domesticity was essentially at odds with the practice of polygamy and meant that Mormonism as a whole was rejected by both American and British society. Indeed, in Britain, the Mormons were viewed as part of the movement "eroding Victorian values," and for many British conservatives, "Mormonism came to epitomize societal degeneracy" (Thorp 109).[21] According to Malcolm R. Thorp, the British campaign against Mormonism began in Liverpool and spread from there through the United Kingdom, attracting the attention of numerous fiction writers. Though the British government took no substantial legal action against the Mormons, as did the Americans, there was still a recognizable campaign of

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[20] Johnson and Wilentz discuss this de-emphasizing of patriarchal authority by the Finneyites and the Mormon valuation of patriarchal authority at length. For this discussion, see Johnson and Wilentz, chapter one.

[21] According to Thorp, the British movement against Mormonism employed the services of Mormon apostate Hans Peter Freece, an American, to speak at a conference given by the Interdenominational Council of Women to warn the young women of England against the "sex appeal and lying promises of Mormon elders" (109).

propagandistic fiction against the Mormons by a knot of conservative writers.[22]

With the perception that Mormonism, but especially polygamy, was degrading the morality of society and the structure of the family, it is easy to see why nineteenth-century audiences were fascinated by polygamy, and why nineteenth-century authors utilized Mormons for various purposes in their works. As Cornwall and Arrington explain, "Mormonism appealed to them [nineteenth-century authors] for its peculiarities, notably polygamy. The evil fact of polygamy made credible almost any fiction about Mormonism" (164). Though the Mormons explained the practice to its members and outsiders using biblical justifications, the practice came across as anti-Christian to a culture invested in Victorian family values. While this seems to have been particularly true for English audiences, American audiences were particularly motivated to classify the practice as anti-Christian, antifamily, antiwoman, and even anti-American. Though the arguments against polygamy did not particularly serve the agenda of women's liberation groups of the time, Bradshaw certainly utilizes the argument of protecting women as part of his crusade against Mormonism and polygamy.

Both *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet*, and anti-Mormon texts in general in the nineteenth century, expose a fear of polygamy. Gordon notes that for antipolygamists of the day, "true marriage as the source of liberty for husbands and wives was a touchstone, the faithful *home* around which the Constitution revolved," and that

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[22] Winifred Graham, a staunch crusader against Mormonism in her day, wrote a number of anti-Mormon fiction pieces as part of the propaganda campaign. The best known of Graham's works of this type is *Ezra the Mormon,* published in 1907. Thorp notes that this work of Graham's was reprinted as a Newnes Sixpenny Novel in 1912. Newnes was a leader in England in producing cheap fiction with mass appeal (Thorp 109, fn. 9).

"Popular literature – novels, short stories, newspaper exposés – created the initial rhetoric" (29). Another term used to describe polygamy places it in the category of deviant sexual practices, which ran entirely contrary to the Victorian morals and understanding of family in the nineteenth century. While this was not the first, or last, time a religious group would introduce polygamy, it had the misfortune to be introduced in an age where cheap printing was on the rise and, therefore, more people had access to both newspapers and dime novels. Previously, such news and fear would have spread slowly and perhaps remained isolated in a particular community or set of communities, but news of Mormon polygamy spread rapidly both across the United States and into Europe.

While both *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* express concern over polygamy, Bradshaw's text uses the denunciation of the practice as the basis for his story, whereas Doyle uses the practice more to provide character definitions and motivations, in addition to its entertainment value. For *A Study in Scarlet,* polygamy provided a sensational flare to garner attention for his story by incorporating an issue discussed regularly in newspapers of Doyle's day. For *Brigham Young's Daughter,* exposing the evils of polygamy is not only the motivation for writing the fictional characters of the story, but it is also the impetus for Bradshaw to publish such a piece as an exposé to aid the ongoing court case against the practice in the U. S. at the time.[23]

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[23] For an in-depth look at the court cases, see Gordon.

Polygamous Marriage as False Marriage

Both texts agree that a polygamous marriage is not a valid form of marriage because it goes against the traditions of Western Christianity and its preference for monogamous marriages. Indeed, Ella Harris decries polygamous marriages as a mockery of the sacred bond that marriage should be, exclaiming to John, "Oh! God what a mockery is the word wife in Utah" (30)! Along the same lines, Bradshaw's introductory material describes polygamous marriages as invalid. Regardless of religious rites designed to make polygamous marriages holy, Bradshaw argues that these marriages are not valid because they contradict the marriages of Western Christianity; and he indicates that plural marriage is a curse, especially for women. For, if a man has as many wives as his fortune allows, and *calls* all these women his wives, she has no traditional attention or love from her "husband" and also has no legal rights for herself in the eyes of the American Government because the marriages are illegal. For, "Before Heaven the first wife is the only true and proper wife. The other[s] have no right to share the title which legally belongs to her" (Bradshaw 24). So, not only are these marriages contrary to all religious sensibilities in the U.S., but it puts these women in the position of antagonists to the government – whether she agrees with her situation or not.

In exploring the religious implications of polygamy, *Brigham Young's Daughter* delves into a semitheological discussion in the form of a debate between the fictional Brigham Young and his daughter, Ella. "I cannot, will not commit the sin of marrying a man, no matter how exalted may be his position [in the Church], who has already six wives," Ella tells her father. Young responds with noted fury and wonder, "My child! My child! Are you mad! Or is it apostasy in my own household!" She replies that she is not

mad but that the Bible, "the Holy Word of God – from which you yourself preach to the people, teaches me that it is wrong, that its [sic] wicked, for a man to have more than one wife" (34). The conversation that follows between these two characterizes the confusion and debate raging in the religious communities of the U. S. at the time about the Biblical precedent for polygamy. The Mormons were certainly not the first to attempt polygamous communities in the period, but theirs was, perhaps, the most reasoned justification of the day. This debate also exemplifies the tensions resulting in religious communities over the preference of the teachings of the New Testament over the Old Testament in American Protestant religions.

Agitated, Young paces the room and fumes on the idea that his daughter would "thus destroy herself" and would defy him, the "Chief Head and Prophet of Zion's Church" (34)! He declares that for Ella to oppose polygamy, Satan himself must possess her. He argues that there is proof in the Bible that, "polygamy was an institution of Heaven," and that the justification for polygamy is, "written down in the Sacred Book that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all beloved and blest of God, had many wives and concubines; as had also Solomon, and Saul, and David, all of them" (34). Young's argument is distinctly drawn from the Old Testament, however, and Ella draws upon the New Testament for her response to him. "But father," she says, "does not the Apostle Paul, speaking of Bishops, say in his inspired Epistle that he, the bishop, shall be the husband of *one* wife" (34)?[24] Brushing her off, Young responds "You do not understand the proper interpretation, my child . . . and even granting all that, is the Apostle greater than the Master, our Saviour [sic]" (34)?

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[24] Emphasis not my own.

But Ella does not give up her argument with Young. She delves further into the religious debate, reasoning, "You have taught the people here that these things were ordained of God, in order that His people might multiply and replenish the earth. Now, had such really been the case would not the Creator have given to Adam in the Garden of Eden two, four, a dozen, or a *hundred* Eves instead of but *one"* (34-35)?[25] Young, increasingly angered by the argument and Ella's calm presentation of it, rages, "Silence girl! You blaspheme! You know not of what you speak" (34-35). Not a man to be defied or made to see any argument or reason contrary to his own, Young draws on his patriarchal power to threaten Ella with submission to his will. He pronounces to her, "You will not submit in love and filial obedience to me, and so I must enforce my authority over you by power. The Devil is indeed abroad in your heart, and you must be disciplined" (34-35). This passage not only expresses the theological debates raging in America over polygamy, but also expresses the idea that Mormon men, because of their overreliance on the authority of the patriarchy, devalued women's opinions.

A Study in Scarlet, on the other hand, gives the impression of a moral condemnation of polygamy without the express statements given against the practice by Bradshaw's characters. Instead, the text more simply notes that John Ferrier refuses to participate in polygamy from his very arrival in Utah. When the Mormons rescued the Ferriers, they were told they must convert and submit themselves to every Mormon doctrine in order to stay safe in the community. Ferrier does this in every other way, but he refuses to take on additional wives and expresses abhorrence at the idea of Lucy entering into a polygamous marriage. While Ferrier does not expressly state a belief that

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[25] Emphases not my own.

the practice is immoral, his vehement refusal to participate in it himself or allow his daughter to participate seems to indicate a fundamental difficulty for Ferrier. It is contrary to the life he knows, and he does suggest that the Mormons run contrary to American values. Furthermore, Ferrier believes that for Lucy to be forced into a polygamous marriage would be a dishonor to her.

Moral Necessity to Oppose Polygamy

While both texts evidence similar opinions of polygamy, their approaches take different forms. *Brigham Young's Daughter* presents polygamy as morally wrong and states that the Mormons and even the United States Government "attempt to hide this moral leprosy and its festering spots of corruption, by wrapping it around with a cloak of religious forms and false piety, [it] is the worst of blasphemy" (19)! Furthermore, the text describes polygamy as "soul destroying depravity" and calls for the practice to be officially outlawed in the U. S. and its territories (19). *Brigham Young's Daughter* emphasizes the idea that it is not only morally right to oppose polygamy, but that it is, in fact, divinely sanctioned to do so. "Dare to do right in the eyes of God," John Harris tells Ella, "and believe me, God will not forget you in the day of your tribulation" (33). Then, the couple vow never to enter polygamy themselves. The text explains, "The lovers had exchanged the conviction that polygamy, or a plurality of wives, was sinful in the sight of God; and John solemnly promised Ella that after he married her he would never take to himself another wife" (30). This exchange comes across as a direct call from the narrative to the American people to do the right thing by opposing polygamy, accompanied by the idea that if the people stand against polygamy, they will be blessed

in the eyes of God for doing so. Indeed, this idea is overtly introduced at the beginning of *Brigham Young's Daughter*. Bradshaw's entire introduction to the Harris tale sets up the moral necessity for every American to stand and oppose polygamy.

This idea of opposing polygamy as morally necessary for Americans is presented blatantly and forcefully in both the short introduction to the work as well as the preliminary material entitled, "A Visit to the Author." In the introduction, Bradshaw communicates the immediate necessity of opposing polygamy from the first lines of the text and even places blame on previous government administrations for not stamping out Mormonism early on. "Through the negligence of successive administrations," he writes to The Publisher, "the hydra-headed monster of Mormonism has grown to vast proportions and defiant spirit" (19). Here, the text argues for immediate action against Mormonism by alluding to ongoing political action against the group, but also implying the subversive dangers of allowing Mormons to continue their antics in Utah unchecked. The "hydra-headed monster of Mormonism" paints a picture of an entity that, if not checked, sprouts more "heads" or, in other words, delves into more dubious activities and practices when one offense has been effectively neutralized. It is "vast" and "defiant" as well, indicating an uncontrollable growth and consistent refusal to alter itself in order to align with the rest of the United States.

The legal battle between Mormons and the United States Government over polygamy began in the 1850s. In 1856, Republican Candidate for President, John C. Freemont, ran his campaign with a promise to prohibit the territories from practicing polygamy, the second of the twin relics of barbarism. However, it was not until 1862 that polygamy was officially made a crime by Lincoln signing the Morrill Act into effect

(Gordon 81). Attempts to repeal the act were denied over the years. Between 1881 and 1882, Congress introduced twenty-three bills and constitutional amendments concerning polygamy in the United States, culminating in the passing of the Edmunds Act. This act was later altered to form the Edmunds-Tucker Act passed in 1887. The battle came to an effective end when the LDS Church itself ended the practice among their congregants with Mormon President Wilford Woodruff's "Manifesto" of 1890 (Gordon 208-220). But in practice, polygamy did not end here. In fact, the Mormon Church was forced to release a second "Manifesto" in 1904 to further emphasize the need for their members to abandon the practice and conform to the laws of the land. By 1910, the Church's official policy toward polygamy was, and is to this day, severe. Any member found to be involved in a polygamous union after 1904 was excommunicated, a policy still in place today. Further, this 1910 policy determined that any members entering into polygamous marriages between 1890 and 1904 were to be barred from holding callings, or specific positions, within the Church organization ("The Manifesto and the End of Plural Marriage").

Polygamy as Antiwoman in *Brigham Young's Daughter*

Brigham Young's Daughter also spends considerable time appealing to women in describing polygamy as not only demeaning to women, but as:

> A crime that degrades woman to a level actually below the beasts of the field! A crime that makes woman at once the slave of lustful men rich enough to purchase her; the mere toy of base passion, to be cast aside the moment a newer and more attractive face is seen.[26] (19)

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[26] Stenhouse and Tanner discuss this fear as polygamous wives in their memoirs.

This statement would certainly have appealed to Bradshaw's female readers and incited their passion against polygamy in particular, and Mormonism in general. In an era of political activism for women's rights, the notion that a woman could be only an object of passion as well as disposable and at the whims of a man would not have set well with the female public. The general perception of polygamous life for women is captured in Fanny Stenhouse's 1872 memoir. She describes the realization that she and her husband would be forced to live a polygamous lifestyle and the grief she felt over the very idea. She writes that it was "a wretched day for me. . . . It haunted me like a spectre [sic]. . . . In a moment, every thing in life appeared to have lost its charm for me" (35). Here, Stenhouse touches on a popular fear of the time: that the women enslaved by polygamy were thoroughly demoralized and in desperate need of rescuing.

This perception seems to inform Bradshaw's appeals to the men of the country to protect their women from such terrible treatment, arguing that "The higher and holier we make the sphere of our mothers, wives and daughters, and the truer we men are to woman, the grander and nobler will be our destiny as a nation" (19). So, not only do men have the duty to protect the women in their lives from polygamy, but the text also categorizes this as a national project. By protecting women and eliminating polygamy, the nation will be blessed by God and continue to become a great national power in the world. In the wake of the devastating U.S. Civil War, this message must have found its way into the hearts of many Americans.

Attitudes Toward Women in *A Study in Scarlet*

A negative picture of polygamy comes across most strongly in *A Study in Scarlet* in its depictions of Enoch J. Drebber and Joseph Stangerson as they compete for Lucy's hand in marriage. The text provides a look at the cavalier attitude of Mormon men toward women when Drebber and Stangerson come to the Ferrier farm to argue over which one of them should have the right to marry Lucy. However, their conflict does not come out of love or respect for the girl. Rather, the two men are competing with each other, and acquiring Lucy is a status symbol for them above anything else. Stangerson opens the conversation about Lucy's fate with John Ferrier, after showing up uninvited to the home:

> "Maybe you don't know us . . . This here is the son of Elder Drebber, and I'm Joseph Stangerson, who travelled with you in the desert when the Lord stretched out His hand and gathered you into the true fold. . . . We have come . . . at the advice of our fathers to solicit the hand of your daughter for whichever of us may seem good to you and to her." (108-109)

Here, Stangerson is simultaneously introducing their cause and reminding Ferrier of the debt he is said to owe to the Mormons for his and Lucy's rescue in the desert all those years ago. While they are technically offering the Ferriers a choice between the two men, she is still limited to choosing one or the other of them. In other words, the idea that Lucy or John has a choice in this matter is mere illusion.

But the base motives of these two men become readily apparent at Stangerson's explanation of his own assessment of his claims to Lucy. Stangerson explains, "As I have but four wives and Brother Drebber here has seven, it appears to me that my claim is the stronger one" (108-109). Stangerson makes no mention of caring for Lucy in any way, but only comments on his and Drebber's standing and status in the community through the number of wives currently maintained by each. Furthermore, Stangerson's

explanation of his better claim to Lucy comes out of his need to build a larger harem, since giving her to Drebber would be unfair as his harem is currently the larger one. Then, the two men argue about their financial means and Church standing as further evidence for their claims. “But my prospects are better,” Stangerson whines to Drebber. “When the Lord removes my father, I shall have his tanning yard and his leather factory. Then I am your elder, and am higher in the Church” (109). This exchange at the Ferrier house marks a stark contrast to Lucy’s relationship with Jefferson Hope and, by extension, between monogamous marriages and polygamous marriages.

Furthering the distaste for the polygamous system, Drebber’s episode with his landlady’s daughter, Alice, provides more evidence of a complete disregard for a woman’s opinion about a proposed union with a Mormon man. Madame Charpentier, Drebber’s landlady, describes a scene to detectives between Drebber and her daughter, Alice:

> “He then turned to Alice, and before my very face proposed to her that she should fly with him. ‘You are of age,’ he said, ‘and there is no law to stop you. I have money enough to spare. Never mind the old girl here, but come along with me now straight away. You shall live like a princess.’ Poor Alice was so frightened that she shrunk away from him, but he caught her by the wrist and endeavoured [sic] to draw her towards the door.” (68)

Here, we see that Drebber believes that because of his saintly status as well as being considerably wealthy, he is entitled to have whatever woman strikes his fancy and that she should feel lucky to have grabbed his attention. Not only is he completely disrespectful to Alice herself, but also to her mother. Drebber tells her to discount her mother’s opinion and come with him. When she modestly refuses, and with her mother present, he then attempts to drag her from the room with him instead of winning her affection and making an honest suit for her hand. His actions are, in this context, not only

socially unacceptable and disrespectful, but also entirely morally reprehensible.

A Study in Scarlet also mentions a popular fear of the day that women both in the United States and abroad were being kidnapped by the Mormons and forced into polygamous marriages. Indeed, Cornwall and Arrington's research indicates that at the time Doyle wrote *A Study in Scarlet,* the yellow press in Britain was "urging hanging for Mormon missionaries, who were widely believed to be kidnapping English servant-girls" (160).[27] This situation likely informs Doyle's inclusion of the idea that Mormons in the American West and their missionaries in Europe were kidnapping women to feed the harems of the elders residing in Salt Lake. "The supply of adult women was running short," the text says, "and polygamy without a female population on which to draw was a barren doctrine indeed" (103). While no real historical evidence exists to substantiate that kidnapping women was actually a practice employed by the Mormons, the fear seems to stem from the missionary efforts in Europe. Indeed, in Doyle's time the missionary efforts of the Church in England were under considerable scrutiny for just such a possibility.

Conclusion

Both fictional texts conclude that polygamy is a false marriage as well as a hostile system of enslavement, dishonor, and demoralization for the women involved. However, the practice of polygamy survives and is encouraged in Utah, despite outside protests, because Mormon men are inherently immoral and overvalue patriarchal authority. Both

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[27] Cornwall and Arrington cite this example from *London Quarterly Review* 2 (1884): 115-22, noting that this is merely one example of this belief in the newspapers of the time in England.

texts express a popular anxiety that allowing the practice of polygamy, the antithesis of traditional, Victorian family values, signals a moral degradation beginning in society at the time. Furthermore, both texts indicate a necessity for Mormons to protect their polygamous lifestyles at any cost. Indeed, where it is viewed as undermining to non-Mormon society, polygamy is represented as the very foundation of Mormon life in Utah. Therefore, the Mormon elders take threats to polygamy very seriously and are willing to employ Danite assassins to eliminate anyone who denounces the practice or tries to escape it, regardless of whether or not they are members of the Church.

CHAPTER V

REPRESENTATIONS AND NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE DANITES

For the burgeoning nineteenth-century penny presses, there was a need for sensational villains to populate the fictional worlds portrayed in *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet*. For Bradshaw and Doyle, the chosen villain was the Danites, or Avenging Angels. Perpetuating a belief in the existence of the Danites in popular culture certainly served a political purpose as well as an entertainment purpose. As Givens explains, "in popular fiction especially, stock villains are in constant demand, and a group like the Mormons, both relatively obscure and culturally objectionable, was ready grist for the mill" (135). The Danites certainly fit into this category, as they were obscure, more legend than fact, and their reported mission of vigilante justice and revenge at the bidding of the Mormon leadership likewise made them culturally objectionable. The problem with the Danites, however, is that fiction writers created such an enduring myth around them that the facts become difficult to separate from the fiction after a certain point. This is significant because of all the misconceptions surrounding Mormonism, the existence of a group of assassins employed by the Church is far removed from historical fact. This is not to say that great liberties were not taken with the entirety of the Mormon image in fiction, but the origins of the Danite portion of the Mormon myth proves more difficult to trace. This is further complicated by the fact that

the majority of writers, Doyle and Bradshaw included, gathered their information about the Danites (and the Mormons generally) not from firsthand experiences or extensive research from reputable sources, but from the print media of the day. As Cornwall and Arrington explain, "fiction writers inherited their notions about Danites from each other. Being borrowers and lenders they quickly developed a convention from which they rarely strayed" (164). As an exploration of *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* will demonstrate, this is certainly true of both the Danites and Mormonism generally in the nineteenth century.

According to research gathered by Cornwall and Arrington on the subject of the Danites in fiction, between 1850 and 1900, fiction writers in both America and Britain "created a fictitious horde of 'Danites' in dozens of short stories and more than eighty novels, travel books, and pseudomemoirs published in America and Europe" (149). Indeed, the authors estimate that at the beginning of the twentieth century there were at least fifty-six anti-Mormon novels published in English featuring "aspects of the Danite myth," including the belief that there was an operational band of Danites in Utah (149). What constitutes the "Danite myth" is at the heart of this discussion, as will be explored below.

Historical facts about the Danites are clouded by the legends surrounding the group from its creation in 1838. Even today, Mormon historians debate the exact nature of the group, its mission, and even its period of existence. What spread from the Missouri period of Mormonism were dark stories of a secretive, violent band of assassins bent on eliminating any perceived threat to the Mormons. In part, these stories stem from trial records given by members of the group and the Mormon leadership that then seemed to

have evolved over time into the perfect set of nineteenth-century villains. For, they are secretive, full of religious zeal, and bent on revenge for wrongs committed against the Mormons.[28] This section will discuss the known history of the Danite group in an effort to examine the appeal of the group to nineteenth-century fiction writers.

Most of these writers, including Doyle and Bradshaw, are concerned with the Danites as an operational band of assassins in the Utah period of Mormon history, under the command of Brigham Young. The Danites are also described by the characters in *Brigham Young's Daughter* as mindless, murderous trackers on assignment from Young. As Mr. Stevens remarks to Harris, "They've trailed us as you may depend all the way from the Wasatch. The villains they're as good as blood hounds" (61). Along similar lines, *A Study in Scarlet* describes Jefferson Hope's suspicions of the group, and the text intimates that "He little knew how far that iron grasp could reach, or how soon it was to close upon them and crush them" (119). However, such descriptions of the Danites and their operations seem to stem from reports of the trials of Mormons in the Missouri period, which have been adapted into the Utah period in fiction in order to make the threat of the Mormons more immediate and a matter of concern for contemporary audiences. To begin to understand the evolution of the Danite myth into popular literature and culture, one must trace the few facts known about the group and its place in the Mormon Church.

While the origins of the Danites are murky at best, most historians agree that the group was formed in 1838 at the Mormon settlement in Far West, Missouri as part of an

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[28] For a discussion of the court testimony against the Mormons in Missouri, see Gentry and LeSueur.

effort to rid the Church of internal dissenters who had emerged due in large part to financial strife among the members. These fiscal issues caused widespread anxiety within the Church at the time. Of particular concern to the early Danite group were internal dissenters speaking against the current Mormon Prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., and certain policies put forth by the Church leadership.

Tensions were particularly high internally after a number of investment and banking failures advocated by the leadership left a majority of its members in personal financial ruin. Among the dissenters were even prominent members and friends of the Prophet, including David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, Lyman E. Johnson, and John Whitmer, which served to intensify internal chaos (Gentry 424). Tension reached an apex in Missouri when Sideny Rigdon delivered a controversial speech on June 19, 1838. In his speech, commonly referred to as the "Salt Sermon," Rigdon condemned dissenters and called for them to be cast out of the community. In his speech, he is said to have quoted Matthew 5:13, which states, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, … it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" ("Chapter 15: The Church in Northern Missouri"). Furthermore, Rigdon called for decisive action against the dissenters and "accused them of seeking to overthrow the Church and committing various crimes" (LeSueur 37). The speech is now credited with increasing the strain within the Church by calling attention to a need for immediate action to quiet the mounting dissent against its leaders.

In response to this speech, a man called Sampson Avard formed the Danites to purge the Church of these unfaithful dissenters.[29] With this speech of Rigdon's as his

foundation, Gentry makes the argument that "the original purpose of the order appears to have been to aid the Saints of Caldwell in their determination to be free from dissenter influence" (427). This idea is also corroborated by testimony from John Corrill, who admitted to attending some of the early Danite meetings. Corrill is quoted as saying that "an effort was made to adopt some plan to get rid of the dissenters," but no specific plan of action was outlined at that point (Gentry 427). Avard and the others were successful in their efforts to chase out the dissenters. On June 19, 1838, the prominent dissenters and their families had fled Missouri, allowing some internal calm to come to the community (LeSueur 38). For, tensions were also growing among the local Missourians against the Mormon settlers. Fearing an increase in violence against their community, the purpose of the Danite group expanded from serving an internal purging function, to an external protective function. It seems that at this point in the Danite's history, they took on a specifically military function, which would feed legends about the group for years to

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[29] LeSueur finds that Avard may not have been wholly responsible for the group's beginnings. Avard is now, however, considered responsible for the inflammatory and war-like mission and rhetoric associated with the Danites later. Initially, however, LeSueur argues that, "most of the Danite activities – such as threatening dissenters and pledging to obey Church leaders whether right or wrong – were sanctioned by the Mormon Prophet [Joseph Smith]" and that "the Danites were well known among the Mormons, who viewed the group as a positive influence in their community, and that many prominent Mormons joined the group" (35). A relative unknown in the Church's history before this, Avard had moved to the Mormon settlement in Far West around June 1838 after emigrating from England and serving in various capacities within the Church. Once in Missouri, Avard joined the internal fight against dissenters within the Church and is thought to have been partially responsible for the document calling for the expulsion of dissenters - David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, Lyman E. Johnson, and John Whitmer from Missouri. Though Avard's exact role in this is still unknown, his signature can be found at the top of the document in company with eighty-two other Mormon men, including Hyrum Smith, the Prophet's brother, and one of his close counselors (Gentry 424, LeSueur 37). Less than a year later, on March 17, 1839, Avard was excommunicated from the Church (Gentry 425-426).

come.

While some scholars argue that the group only existed for a few weeks in Missouri or, like Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whitaker, that it was not an extra-military organization, LeSueur and Gentry agree that the group was both militaristic and existed as an officially recognized Church organization for at the very least several months.[30] However, due to the chaos surrounding the formation of the group, Gentry notes that "For this and other reasons, one finds much difficulty in isolating the many threads in order to lay bare the facts" (421). The idea that the group served a militantly protective function was reinforced by the Danite involvement in what has come to be known as the Gallatin election battle.

This "battle" occurred in Gallatin, Missouri on August 6, 1838, when local Missourians made efforts to bar Mormons from voting. According to an account by John L. Butler, a Mormon and a Danite Captain, a group of Missourians attacked one of the Mormons present, at which point Butler said, "I hollowed out to the top of my voice saying 'o yes, you Danites, here is a job for us'" (LeSueur 40).[31] Corroborated by several accounts, including one by known Danite, John D. Lee, once Butler gave that signal, a group of men sprang into action against the Missourians, resulting in a Mormon victory

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[30] Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whitaker argue that the Danites' primary function was not as a military supplement for the protection of Mormon Church members. Rather, they argue that the group was a community service organization, which LeSueur compares to a modern day Elks Club. Jessee and Whitaker's argument against LeSueur can be found in their 1988 article, "The Last Months of Mormonism in Missouri: The Albert Perry Rockwood Journal" published by *BYU Studies.*

[31] Quoted from the Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 6, 1838, Butler account.

and a military march to Daviess County with 150 Danite members under the leadership of the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon (LeSueur 40).[32]

It is the difficulty of separating fact from fiction that feeds the Danite legend. The group is only historically verifiable to a certain extent, and what can be corroborated about it indicates a distinct militaristic, vigilante justice flavor to the organization. Thus, the Danites fit easily into the category of stock villains of nineteenth-century fiction. They serve as a scare tactic for propagandistic anti-Mormon fiction like *Brigham Young's Daughter* and provide the sensational thrill needed for the entertainment and sales value in *A Study in Scarlet*.

Enforcing Fear and Conformity in Utah

In creating a more tangible Mormon villain and to further stir up anti-Mormon feeling, both *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* employ a murderous and secretive band of Mormon men in their stories that they refer to as either the "Avenging Angels" or "The Danites." The characterizations of the Danite group by both authors certainly inspire fear within the texts. Part of the reason the group inspires such fear is that they are, by nature, a secretive, fraternal group of men with a religious bent. Indeed, John D. Lee's memoir corroborates this idea:

> Some of the writers said it was useless to send less than three or four men for each Mormon [to subdue an uprising in Missouri] because Mormons felt sure of Heaven if they fell fighting, hence they did not fear death; that they fought with the desperation of devils. Such reports spread like wild-fire throughout Northern Missouri. (Lee 65)

Herein lies the power of the Danites. They are more rumor, more legend than fact to most

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[32] Gathered from the Reed Peck "Manuscript."

people, meaning that the mere verbal threat of their vengeance is enough to keep the people of Utah, as well as those passing through the area, in check and subservient to the Mormon agenda.[33]

However, when the Danites do act, they do so without mercy or feeling, as *A Study in Scarlet* illustrates. After their escape from Salt Lake City, Jefferson Hope and the Ferriers stop for food and rest, believing they are beyond the retribution of the Danites. Hope leaves his fiancée and her father to find food, but by the time he returns, the fire he had started has burned down, Lucy is gone, and a freshly dug grave marked "John Ferrier" greets Hope upon his return. The image is ghostly and becomes particularly violent for Jefferson Hope:

> [H]is eye fell upon an object which made every nerve of his body tingle within him. There was no mistaking it for anything but a newly-dug grave. The inscription upon the paper was brief, but to the point: JOHN FERRIER, Formerly of Salt Lake City, Died August 4th, 1860. (121-122)

This passage perfectly illustrates the fear inspired by the Danites. After plaguing the Ferriers for weeks with threatening messages left in their home or on their doorstep

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[33] The involvement of the Church leadership in the group is still debated by Mormon scholars today. According to court testimony given by John Corrill, a former member of the Danites, "I *think* the original object of the Danite band was to operate against the dissenters; but afterwards it grew into a system to carry out the designs of the Presidency; and, if necessary to use physical force to build up the Kingdom of God, it was to be done by them" (Gentry 427). While historians cannot be certain of Joseph Smith's approval or involvement in this next phase of the Danites, LeSueur lays out four things that are known, and would indicate Smith had some idea of the group's activities. "(1) his chief counselor, Sidney Rigdon, delivered the Salt Sermon; (2) his brother (and other counselor) Hyrum signed the letter warning the dissenters to leave; (3) the Church recorder, Danite Col. George Robinson, described the expulsion as a righteous punishment of the wicked; and (4) just two weeks later, both Rigdon and the Danites played prominent roles at the Fourth of July celebration [where a number of Danite members were identified by their Danite military titles]. If Joseph Smith didn't know beforehand of the Danites' plan to expel dissenters, it certainly appears that he endorsed it afterward" (LeSueur 39).

intimidating them to comply with Young's command that Lucy enter a polygamous marriage, the Danites track them down and enforce the Prophet's will upon the escapees. The implication here is that whatever the cost, the Danites will enact their own justice on any dissenters and will not allow any woman to escape polygamy.

What makes the Danites in this scene from *A Study in Scarlet* particularly chilling villains is, as discussed above, the fact that they are acting on behalf of a religious organization. However, they are so zealous in their mission of protecting the Church and the patriarchal authority of the elders that they will commit a frankly heinous crime against innocent people who were, mere weeks before, considered upstanding and well-liked members of the Mormon community. But, because they disagreed with one aspect of the Mormon doctrine, there is no trial or official discussion of what was to be done about the Ferriers. Instead, they are stealthily tracked down over a number of days and miles by these brutal men, who murder the father right in front of the daughter as a warning and drag her back to force her into a marriage she does not want. Indeed, this particular representation of the group enforces the idea not only that Mormon men were amoral and beastly by nature, but also that preserving polygamy and ensuring a constant stream of plural wives was necessary to Mormon society and ultimately worth killing for.

It is not surprising, therefore, that nineteenth-century authors and audiences found sensational thrill in the Danites. Combined with the fact that, though evidence exists authenticating the Danites as a militant organization under Mormon command in Missouri, later denials of the group's existence by Church leaders seemed only to fuel the belief of outsiders that the group did exist and was inherently sinister. In *Brigham Young's Daughter,* for example, the text concludes that "We are aware the Mormons

fiercely deny the existence of the Danites or Avenging Angels, but there are too many well-authentic facts about those Assassins' doings to permit of a doubt as to their reality" (69). While this is true to a certain extent in the Missouri period, in writing the piece, Bradshaw seems to believe that there was a band of Danites active in Utah and under the command of Brigham Young at the time he wrote *Brigham Young's Daughter*. For example, in his supplemental historical information following the narrative, Bradshaw cites the Gunnison and Mountain Meadows Massacres as evidence of an operational band of Danites in Utah under the direct command of Brigham Young.[34] While this does serve to strengthen his argument and further fuel his propagandistic agenda, his material appears to regurgitate the information found in various newspapers of the day rather than show scholarly research.

Secrecy of the Danites

Part of the effectiveness of the Danites in *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* for inspiring fear and, thus, conformity, is their secrecy. "None knew who belonged to this ruthless society," Doyle writes; and "The names of the participators in the deeds of blood and violence done under the name of religion were kept profoundly secret" (103). They are nameless, faceless, and wholly obedient to the dictates of their religion with a free pass to commit atrocities in its name and with little discrimination. Bradshaw describes the group in a similar fashion to Doyle and further points out the fear the group inspired as a result of their fraternal structure and secretive meetings and

[34] For a brief discussion on the Gunnison Massacre, see Walker. For an in-depth look at the Mountain Meadows Massacre, see Brooks and Shipps.

movements. It was the Danites' "invisibility, and the mystery which was attached to it [that] made this organization doubly terrible. It appeared to be omniscient and omnipotent, and yet was neither seen nor heard" (Bradshaw 102). While Bradshaw makes specific mention of the Danites as the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the idea that the group was invisible and yet ever-present in daily life inspires more fear than listing atrocities they committed (Bradshaw 35). For, as Holmes observes to Watson, "without imagination there is no horror" (54). The secretive workings of the Danites in both works, but particularly in Doyle's, inspire such fear because so much is left to the imagination in the commentary on the Danites within the texts.

In *A Study in Scarlet,* Doyle points out the secretive nature of the group by their established sign and countersign signals to denote membership. "Nine to seven" one will call and the other responds "seven to five" to indicate they are one of the initiated members (117). In a similar fashion, Bradshaw writes that the Danites use an obscure phrase when they murder Stevens. "Remember," Stevens's killer whispers to him, "Dan is a serpent in the path!" (62). While this is neither explained nor utilized again in the text, it certainly serves the purpose of vilifying the group by attributing a ritualistic aspect to the murder. Because the phrases are not clarified in either text, the reader is left to wonder to what they refer, which reinforces the mysterious and secretive tendencies of the villainous group. The idea that the Danites had certain call signs or gestures to identify themselves to one another or to call for assistance to their fellows becomes, in fiction, a way to easily communicate the subversive nature of the group, as well as underline their potential to cause mysterious disappearances of people from the

community if they were not in line with the preaching of the Church leadership.[35] Furthermore, the fact that the names of those involved with the Danites were kept with utmost secrecy allows for increased fear of the group because one never knows who might be a Danite spy on the lookout for dissenters. "The very friend to whom you communicated your misgivings as to the Prophet and his mission," Doyle writes, "might be one of those who would come forth at night with fire and sword to exact a terrible reparation. Hence every man feared his neighbour [sic], and none spoke of the things which were nearest his heart" (103-104).

Religious Zealots

Not only was the group secretive and protective of its own, but its members were especially dangerous because they were fueled by the belief that they are protecting their religion. *Brigham Young's Daughter* describes the group as "a body of zealots, who, at the bidding of the Mormon Rulers secretly murdered any one [sic] whose death was necessary to the Church" (35). Indeed, this paints a fearsome picture of a religiously motivated and sanctioned group moving in secret at the bidding of a potentially corrupt and biased Church leadership to eliminate anyone daring to speak or act against their Church. But not only are they willing to assassinate specific individuals for the Church,

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[35] According to Gentry, this idea likely comes from the rumor perpetuated by court testimony given in some of the Missouri cases against the Mormons from apostates that meetings and initiations into the order were done in secrecy, and members were required to swear "solemn oaths and covenants." The oath was standardized and given to every member of the organization so that they were tightly bound together as a group. Gentry notes that the oath given to members by Avard was, "In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I do solemnly obligate myself ever to conceal and never to reveal the secrets of this society called the Daughters of Zion. Should I ever do the same, I hold my life as the forfeiture" (Gentry 431).

they are also willing to massacre settlers attempting to pass through Utah if the leadership requires. A secretive, fraternal group of men killing those who oppose them is chilling in itself, but a group who does the same and incorporates the belief that God is on their side because they are protecting their adopted, heavily persecuted religion makes the Danites that much more intimidating. Furthermore, this zealousness implies that the members of the group have no thoughts for themselves, but will risk their lives in any fight because they believe God protects them.

Along similar lines, *A Study in Scarlet* indicates that the Danites' belief in their mission of protecting the Church from both internal and external threats made the group more formidable than any such organization before it in history. Doyle writes, "Not the Inquisition of Seville, nor the German Vehmgericht, nor the Secret Societies of Italy, were ever able to put a more formidable machinery in motion than that which cast a cloud over the State of Utah" (102). Therefore, not only are the Danites dangerous zealots for their cause, but also Doyle indicates that they are the most dangerous, most effective band of zealots in Western History.

While fear of the Danites from outsiders is natural, what makes them that much more terrifying is that they did not just go after outsiders who voiced dissent against the Mormon church. When the occasion arose, they happily went after their own as well. Interestingly, Doyle accurately describes the Danites as having the initial purpose of internal purging, and that taking down outsiders was only a secondary function and motivation. "At first," Doyle writes, "this vague and terrible power was exercised only upon the recalcitrant who, having embraced the Mormon faith, wished afterwards to pervert or abandon it. Soon, however, it took a wider range" (103). The idea that one has

more to fear coming from inside the Church is particularly chilling. For, while the Danites had a duty to protect the faithful, one's status as a member of the faithful was constantly precarious according to both texts. "A rash word or a hasty act was followed by annihilation," according to *A Study in Scarlet* (103).

Conclusion

The fact that the Danites did exist at one time makes the use of the group as fictional villains not only particularly sensational, but also incredibly effective for *A Study in Scarlet* and *Brigham Young's Daughter*. For Doyle, introducing Sherlock Holmes for the first time would have the most impact with audiences in the context of such a sensational and popular backdrop. For Bradshaw, the use of the Danites would have immediately intensified fears of the Mormons and their activities, strengthening popular awareness of them, and helping build the case against Mormon polygamy. Though both pieces utilize the Danites for different purposes and to different effects, both represent the group in similar ways and draw similar conclusions about their activities.

First, both authors conclude that the Danites were a fraternal, secretive, militant organization controlled by the Church presidency. Second, they both assert that the group operated with a revenge mindset, bent on avenging the Church and its followers from previous wrongs committed against them and silencing any potential dissenters. Third, they contend that the Danites made Utah a fear-based community hostile to any outsiders. The following statement from Bradshaw's novel echoes similar fears about the Danites expressed in Doyle's novel:

> Fuller knowledge of the organization which produced such terrible results served to increase rather than to lessen the horror which it inspired in the minds of men.

> None knew who belonged to this ruthless society. The names of the participators in the deeds of blood and violence done under the name of religion were kept profoundly secret. The very friend to whom you communicated your misgivings as to the Prophet and his mission might be one of those who would come forth at night with fire and sword to exact a terrible reparation. Hence, every man feared his neighbor, and none spoke of the things which were nearest his heart. (103-104)

Given the different national origins of these two stories, the similarity in portrayals of the Danites would seem to indicate that the Danite legend was firmly in the public mindset at the time. Because the Danites were, from their founding, a secretive organization and because much of what is known about their activities is speculation and court testimony, they were an easy group to use in fostering fear and contempt against the Mormons in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the perception of Mormonism in the late nineteenth century seems to be that of a religion ruled over by a theocratic dictator, Brigham Young, who required submission from all who crossed paths with the Mormons. "Now then, learn to submit," the fictional Brigham Young tells his fictional daughter Ella. "You shall die ere you shall cross my purpose" (36). Lines like these provide fuel for the rumors that those refusing to conform to Mormon doctrine would be fated to cross paths with the Danites.

Both *Brigham Young's Daughter* and *A Study in Scarlet* reinforce the idea that the Danites existed in Mormon communities to enforce the will of the Mormon elders, Brigham Young in particular, eliminate internal dissent, and to ensure the survival of the polygamist lifestyle in Utah. In addition, both texts imply that the operation of the Danites is possible because Mormon men are blindly zealous and lacking in traditional morals. Therefore, these men will murder indiscriminately for their commanding elders in order to protect their sexually deviant lifestyle. This is evidenced in both texts by the primary mission of the group: first to track down escaped women attempting to flee a

polygamous marriage, and second to kill anyone who tried to stop them (like John Ferrier and Mr. Stevens). Indeed, this notion of the Danites in the texts fits into the mold created by nineteenth-century fiction authors.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Mormonism was a perfect target for the emerging sensationalism of nineteenth-century print media. Because Mormon practices ran contrary to the common modes and morality of American and British society, authors of anti-Mormon fiction in the period imbued their texts with the anxieties of the day; namely, the fear of a potential degradation of traditional family and societal values. For example, Givens notes:

> What is particularly surprising about the Mormon caricature as it develops are the ways in which it goes well beyond depictions of lustful elders and prurient lifestyles. Not the catalog of crimes imputed to the Mormons, but the particular ways in which the Mormons are demonized, is the key to illuminating public anxieties and how fiction exploited – while it alleviated – them. (135)

For this reason, Mormonism was an ideal topic for Doyle and Bradshaw in writing *A Study in Scarlet* and *Brigham Young's Daughter,* respectively. For Doyle, this allowed him to capitalize financially on the sensationalized aspects of Mormonism and provided him the perfect opportunity to introduce his new detective, Sherlock Holmes, to the public. For Bradshaw, writing about the Mormons allowed him to join the moral crusade against polygamy in the United States.

Undeniably, the vilification of Mormons in popular fiction was widespread in the period. By Gordon's count, there were nearly one hundred pieces of writing that

capitalized on polygamy, which "captured the drama of the conflict, painting vivid pictures of the disintegration of marriages in a far western territory" (29-30). As a result of this widespread use of Mormonism in fiction beginning in the 1850s and the advent of the penny presses churning out cheap literature that appealed to the masses on a large scale, the collected fiction works over time created an identifiable Mormon myth on which all authors came to rely. By the time Doyle and Bradshaw were writing in the later part of the century, this myth was well established; and, therefore, both authors' representations of the Mormon fall into similar patterns, despite their differences in national origin and even genre. Therefore, both pieces can be said to rely on this Mormon myth. Thus, comparing and contrasting the portrayals of Mormons given by Doyle and Bradshaw provides evidence that it was the popular press that informed the general public's ideas about Mormonism in the nineteenth century.

These anxieties about Mormons can be simplified into three categories that Doyle and Bradshaw represent in strikingly similar ways: first, the moral character of Mormon male converts; second, the Mormon practice of polygamy; and third, their use of the Danites to enforce conformity in their religion. Both authors assess Mormon converts, particularly Mormon men, as inherently animalistic, cruel, and ill educated enough to be blindly obedient to a corrupt leadership. This leadership, the Church elders, are similarly characterized as cruel and brutish, but are notably cunning in both texts, thus inspiring fear and obedience from their converts. For both authors, this means the religion itself is inherently corrupt. Because the main focus of Mormons in these texts revolves around keeping women enslaved in polygamy and silencing dissenters, both authors conclude that Mormonism does not fall within traditional Christian lines.

Polygamy, in both texts, is at the heart of the popular conflict with the Mormons. Despite the religious freedoms idealized in the United States during the Second Great Awakening, there was a distinct belief that civilized Western society was founded on Christian monogamy. Coupled with the view of polygamy as a form of female slavery, Mormonism was a significant source of anxiety for popular culture. Gordon explains:

> Mormons, convinced that the New Dispensation had created a new order that would usher in the Millennium, embraced authority, patriarchy, certainty. In so doing, they challenged those around them to explain how such a faith could be inconsistent with religious freedom, and why liberty, marriage, and government depended on Christian monogamy. Mormonism, like slavery, became a 'question.' Antipolygamists could not, of course, summon new revelation to counteract latter-day claims. Instead, they worked with another form of text. They appealed in ways that abolitionists and other reformers had taught them were effective. They told stories. (29)

These stories were certainly effective as they painted a grim picture of life in Utah for women. In *A Study in Scarlet,* polygamy is even presented as fatal for a woman of high moral character like Lucy Ferrier. Both Doyle and Bradshaw come to the conclusion that polygamy is a system of false marriage, allowing for the enslavement of innocent women into harems of elders who both demoralize and dishonor them. Further, this system functions and is protected in Utah because the patriarchy is the source of highest authority for Mormons, and Mormon men are of low moral character and enslaved to their basest instincts. Because polygamy is the basis of Mormon society in the texts and in the popular imagination, protecting this system is of the utmost importance to Mormons, which creates a need for a cunning band of assassins like the Danites.

Because neither Bradshaw nor Doyle had a firsthand knowledge of Mormonism their portrayals of the Danites are drawn from the pervasive Mormon myth. However, the Danites serve a greater purpose in the texts and are not just an easily utilized stock

villain. They represent the heart of the popular fears about Mormonism. For both authors, the Danites illustrate the corruptions existing in Mormonism, particularly among the Mormon male elite, as well as exemplifying the evils and influences of polygamy. Both texts also indicate that the Danites were fearsome because they were secretive and fraternal, zealous, militant, and controlled by the whims of a corrupt Church presidency. The zeal associated with the group directly results in their revenge mindset, making them willing to commit murder indiscriminately in the name of protecting the Church and doing the bidding of the elders. This is illustrated in the two novels by the fact that the "Avenging Angels" hunt down respectable men like John Harris and Jefferson Hope, murder Mr. Stevens and John Ferrier, and terrorize the innocent girls Ella and Lucy on the order of Brigham Young and the Church presidency. Both texts represent the group as particularly cruel, immoral, and unjust. The representation of the Danites is at the heart of popular fears about Mormonism. That such a band could exist, terrorizing, tracking, and killing innocent and God-fearing people, certainly signaled a breakdown of traditional societal values.

While these portrayals are steeped in fiction and have only a small relationship to historical fact overall, these narratives were incredibly powerful in spreading a fear and even hatred of Mormonism. They furthered the case against Mormonism more effectively than any other method of the period. But the real appeal of the Mormon myth does not lie strictly in the realm of fact or printed fiction. The real power of the myth lies in between the two in the imagination of the readers, which is stirred by the works of Bradshaw and Doyle.

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