

Discoveries

*Two Centuries of
Poems by Mormon Women*

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Poems by Mormon Women

Compiled and Edited by
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at Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

Association for Mormon Letters
Provo, Utah

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*To my husband, Cless Young,
a great supporter of Mormon women.*

—SEH

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

—STB

Poetry

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

—*Josephine Spencer*

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Beginning



Of the Beginning ❀

Susan Elizabeth Howe

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

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

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

As Earth swirled in its sphere
we were centripetal. As seas
gathered together, we touched a finger
to the face of the deep. As clouds
meandered

into the sky, our cheeks moistened
in the mist. Bedrock settled
in our beds, and from us
soils learned to nourish.
We saw matter

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

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

Blackberry ❁

Penny Allen

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

Woman

Lu Dalton

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Embryo

Sally T. Taylor

Creation.

Before it is, it moves.

Does it think as it

turns its face?

Is its knee-jerk reflex?

What happens at these

fibrillations?

Do teaspoon hands cup,

and fingers feel each

its own movement?

It is still just before

the exodus, when the water

turns to blood.

Firstborn,

the angel of death

stands ready before dawn.

A Lullaby in the New Year ❀

Linda Sillitoe

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

When I Was a Child

