



7-31-2004

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Helps, Louise (2004) "Look Once Again at Cumorah's Hill: The Poets' View," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 13 : No. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol13/iss1/12>

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Look Once Again at Cumorah's Hill: The Poet's View

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Reference *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 13/1-2 (2004): 110-23, 173.

ISSN 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

Abstract Robert Hughes collected eighteen poems about the Hill Cumorah from 170 years of church magazines and periodicals. Author Louise Helps presents these poems in their entirety in this article and discusses the themes, images, and techniques of the poets. The poems give insight into the feelings and attitudes of the poets as well as the then-current fashions in poetry.

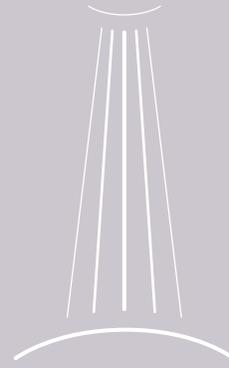
LOOK ONCE AGAIN AT

Annora's Hill

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THE POET'S VIEW

LOUISE HELPS



CUMORAH IS ONE STEEP HILL among many, a tree-covered ridge much like others in its neighborhood, not especially high, not especially large, and not especially prominent in any other aspect. Yet Latter-day Saints have only to hear the word *Cumorah* for powerful images to come flooding into their minds—images of warfare and peace, destruction and protection, endings and beginnings, and wickedness and faithfulness.

Poetry, too, creates images to stir the emotions. As we read or hear the carefully crafted words of a poem, pictures flow through our minds and into our hearts. Within varying constraints of rhyme and meter, the poet chooses and arranges words with care so as to convey meaning with economy and intensity. Many of us have enjoyed the experience of writing poetry in an attempt to express the deepest feelings of our hearts. As readers in turn, we recognize that our own life experiences can amplify or alter the message and impact of a poem.

It is only natural, then, that the concept of Cumorah should have captured the hearts and imaginations of Latter-day Saint poets. So much of our history, both ancient and modern, is rooted in Cumorah and the people who lived and died there. We shake our heads disbelievingly at the hatred and despair that motivated Coriantumr and Shiz; our hearts are stirred each time we read of the tragic destruction of the Nephite nation. We feel Moroni's anguish over the wasteful loss of his people but are filled with hope and then joy as we contemplate the fulfillment of his mission, both in and out of mortality. All of these feelings have been expressed, differently and at different times, in Latter-day Saint poetry.

Eighteen of these poems are presented here. They were collected by Robert Hughes from 170 years of church magazines and periodicals and

appear in their entirety as a supplement to this article in the order in which they were published. Although these poems deal in varied ways with the events and feelings that surround Cumorah, many of them share common threads, the most notable being Cumorah as the scene of ancient battles.

Just before the final destruction of the Jaredites, Moroni tells us in Ether 15:11, the army of Coriantumr pitched its “tents by the hill Ramah; and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the Lord, which were sacred.” In Mormon 6, Mormon tells of hiding the records that had been entrusted to him in a hill called Cumorah, from the top of which he surveyed the grim scene of his fallen people, utterly destroyed by the Lamanites the day before.

Although it is possible that the tragic, obliterating wars that engulfed the Jaredite and Nephite civilizations took place far from upstate New York, terrible irony—that such a beautiful, peaceful area could possibly be the site of the destruction of two nations—runs through Theodore E. Curtis’s poems “Cumorah” and “Hail, Cumorah! Silent Wonder” (two stanzas of which follow).¹

Twice a people’s last protection!
Twice a witness of a world,
In the arms of insurrection,
To prophetic ruin hurled:

Ramah, of the ancient nation,
Dawns thy day at last,
From your bosom comes salvation
And the story of the past.

Although his poem is titled “Moroni,” Donnell W. Hunter describes the final battle of the Jaredites. The Nephites are simply echoing, through their actions, what has happened at Cumorah before. Thus,

Why must men hurtle here in hate,
eager to find a foretold fate
on Cumorah?

In the first two stanzas of Roger Howey’s “Memories of Cumorah,” the destruction of the Jaredites and

then the Nephites is recounted, but the two are not linked—their stories are simply told. It is left to the reader to recognize the repetition.

O little hill, thy name scarce known,
Had’st thou but tongue to tell
How on thy slopes,
’Midst forlorn hopes,
The Jaredites in thousands fell,
Till none were left to mourn.

Thou could’st recount the story true,
That sad and awful end,
Of Nephi’s race,
Upon thy face;
With prophet, relative, and friend,
All slain within thy view.

Inextricably linked with the story of Cumorah is the story of Moroni. Both the hill and the man were lonely guardians of the precious records, keeping them safely hidden until the time came to bring them forth to the world. Moroni’s mission is implicit in almost all the poems under consideration and is a primary focus of a few.

Moroni’s burial of the records echoes and emphasizes the death of his nation. In Dale Bjork’s “Those Quiet Rolling Woods,” we sense the dissonance the poet feels as he depicts the view that the Nephites’ final battle took place where Moroni’s last mortal effort with the plates occurred. He intertwines images of death and images of burying a nation and sacred records, as seen in the following lines:

Where Moroni knelt as if in prayer
And buried his people beneath the
trees,
Buried them all in one small grave
Sealed by a stone and crisp, curling
leaves.

Side by side with the images of death and burial are suggestions of new life and birth. In “Voice of Cumorah,” by Jo Adelaide Stock, the hill is represented as a mother holding and guarding the records within herself, ready to give birth to them at the appropriate time. Cumorah itself recounts:



Donnell Hunter composed the poem “Moroni.” Courtesy of English Department, BYU–Idaho.

The earth which long my treasure kept
Is holy earth;
Within my bosom close it slept
Until its birth.

The hill's role as guardian, nurturer, and, in a sense, parent is reiterated in the next stanza:

To me a righteous prophet gave
The work of years;
To keep, to cherish and to save
Through trial and tears!

One of the most pervasive images in the selected poems is light. This light is sometimes contrasted with the darkness that came before and sometimes presented on its own. In any case, again and again we are shown the light that spilled forth from Cumorah. This image, representing in Latter-day Saint understanding revelation, truth, intelligence, and the gospel, as well as the pure sunlight of a spring morning—admixed thoroughly with the story of Joseph Smith—is frequently colored gold, reminding us of treasure, wealth, springtime, and, of course, the golden plates. Ruth May Fox's "Cumorah" reads in part:

Look once again at Cumorah's hill
Where the morning beams their radiance spill
On Joseph's face; through the golden light
He looks on the form of an angel bright,
With the sheen of heaven, who gives him the plates—
The golden leaves which open the gates
Of mystery.

Theodore E. Curtis, in "Historic Ramah's Verdant Slope," describes how

Last of a seeric line, Moroni sealed
And buried deep in lone Cumorah's hill
The golden record of his vanished race.
Replete with prophecy and luminous
With truth it lay. . . .



One of the most pervasive images in the selected poems is light.

And later, after a period of darkness and ruin:

Then gray-eyed dawn poured up a shaft of light
Across the starry empire of the night,
And, with the ancient standard high unfurled,
God's flow'ring purpose ripened o'er the world.
Among the glories of the new born day
Cumorah's mighty sentinel appeared
Robed in a light that paled the mid-day sun.

Parley P. Pratt's "An Angel from on High" similarly employs the images of light and glory, as seen in this stanza:

The time is now fulfilled,
The long expected day;
Let earth obedience yield,
And darkness flee away;

Remove the seals, be wide unfurled
Its light and glory to the world.

"Let earth obedience yield" is an interesting line here, for it could be an exhortation to the people of the earth to yield to the truths of the gospel or an



Poetess Ruth May Fox (holding baby), pictured here with her family.
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exhortation to the brown earth of Cumorah to yield forth the sacred record that has so long remained hidden. Either or both actions will lead to “darkness flee[ing] away.”

Many scriptural allusions appear in these poems on Cumorah. Fox’s “Cumorah” refers to 2 Nephi 29:3, “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible and there cannot be any more Bible”:

Away! Away with your ancient lore,
We have one Bible, we’ll brook no more;
The canon of scripture is all complete. . . .

The poem also refers to Isaiah 29:14, “for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid”:

So said the wise, with a haughty smile,
While the youthful seer their lips revile. . . .

The allusion that appears repeatedly, however, echoes Isaiah 29:4, “thou shalt . . . speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and . . . shall whisper out of the dust.” This reference can be seen clearly in W. W. Phelps’s “An Angel Came Down”:

A heavenly treasure; a book full of merit;
It speaks from the dust, by the power of the Spirit. . . .

and appears again in Parley P. Pratt’s “An Angel from on High”:

Sealed by Moroni’s hand,
It has for ages lain,
To wait the Lord’s command,
From dust to speak again.

“A Nation Speaks from Out the Dust,” by Theodore E. Curtis, alludes to the prophecy in Isaiah 29:4 and 2 Nephi 26:16 in both the title and the body of the poem:

A nation speaks from out the dust!
Let Joseph’s scattered seed rejoice!

while “Historic Ramah’s Verdant Slope” reminds us that the Book of Mormon’s coming forth fulfills that prophecy:

’Twas prophecy’s fulfilment, that a race
Brought low should speak as from the silent dust.

and Minnie I. Hodapp’s “Angel-Guarded Book of Gold” ends with

Voice of love that cannot tire,
Lowly whispering from the dust!

In “An Acrostic,” by Phineas H. Young, the reference is less direct, but still the word *dust* in this context reminds us of Isaiah’s prophecy:

Buried in dust, I lay
On yonder mountain top. . . .

Written over a period of 170 years, these poems give us insight into the feelings and attitudes of the poets, as well as then-current fashions in poetry.

“An Angel Came Down,” by W. W. Phelps, and “An Angel from on High,” by Parley P. Pratt, were published in 1833 and 1840, respectively. Both have their metrical pattern faithfully reproduced in each stanza, evidence that they were probably written as hymns. Such consistent poetic meter is, of course, necessary for a hymn, making it possible for all verses to be sung easily to the same melody.

Both of these hymns tell the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, though the narrative nature of “An Angel from on High” contrasts with the exhortatory approach of “An Angel Came Down.” In “An Angel from on High,” Parley P. Pratt declares:

Lo, Israel filled with joy,
Shall now be gathered home,
Their wealth and means employ
To build Jerusalem.
While Zion shall arise and shine,
And fill the earth with truth divine.

while W. W. Phelps urges his audience:

O Israel! O Israel!
In all your abidings,
Prepare for your Lord
When you hear these glad tidings.
Listen O isles, and give ear ev’ry nation,
For great things await you in this generation:
The kingdom of Jesus, in Zion, shall flourish;
The righteous will gather; the wicked must perish.

Both hymns, however, celebrate the content of the sacred record, particularly the fulness of the gospel, and invite scattered Israel to gather and prepare for the coming of the Savior. They are joyful hymns, full of testimony and the excitement of the restoration.

Phineas H. Young's "An Acrostic" was published in 1853. A literary device in which the first letter of each line combines with others to spell a word, acrostics were popular at the time. Young's poem spells the words *Book of Mormon* in acrostic fashion. The wording in the poem is simple and straightforward. What is perhaps most notable is how succinctly, within the constraints of the verse form, Young describes the history and mission of the Book of Mormon, as well the gathering and glorious future of the tribes of Israel.

In two simple lines—

Make nations from the north
O'erspread this promised land. . . .

—he reminds us of the scattering and subsequent gathering of the ten tribes of Israel "from the land of the north" (Doctrine and Covenants 110:11) to America, the land of promise.

"Cumorah," "Hail, Cumorah! Silent Wonder," "A Nation Speaks from Out the Dust," and "Historic Ramah's Verdant Slope" were all written by Theodore H. Curtis. "Cumorah" was published in 1909, and the very similar "Hail Cumorah! Silent Wonder" in the hymn book of 1927. "A Nation Speaks from Out the Dust" and "Historic Ramah's Verdant Slope" were published in 1927 and 1928, respectively. The tone of all of these poems is lofty, which may at first distance the reader from the works, but there are some golden nuggets hidden inside them.

Both "Cumorah" and "Hail Cumorah! Silent Wonder" use a pattern of alternating masculine and feminine rhyme. In masculine rhyme the emphasis and rhyme occur on the last syllable of the line, for example "world" and "hurled," or "last" and "past." In feminine rhyme the stress and rhyme are found in an earlier syllable, and the last syllable of the line is not stressed, for example, "protection" and "insurrection" or "nation" and "salvation." This alternating pattern gives the poems a very polished sound and a sense of movement.

An interesting image in these two poems is that of the "story written on your heart of gold." Several different but compatible meanings come to mind.

A "heart of gold" is commonly used to describe kindness and benevolence—is the poet imbuing the hill, in its role as guardian of the records, with these characteristics? Scripturally, if something is written in our hearts, it becomes of paramount importance to us. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord says, "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." And then of course, the hill's "heart of gold" just might refer to the golden plates hidden within its substance!

The brightest light one can imagine bursts out in Curtis's "A Nation Speaks from Out the Dust":

One hundred years have passed away
Since pillowed in celestial flame,
To Ramah's slopes, dethroning day,
The angel of the record came.

In "Historic Ramah's Verdant Slope," we see wickedness rolling over the land in waves:

The blighting shadows of iniquity
Rolled o'er the crowning splendor of the land
As night succeeds the glory of the day.

This water image is echoed later in the poem:

The dusky Lamanites, whose heritage
Was ignorance, surged up and down the earth
Like clashing billows of an angry sea.

"Clashing billows" suggests that the Nephites were not the only people the Lamanites hated, for the Lamanites fought among themselves as well (see Mormon 8:8).

In each of the four poems the poet refers to the Hill Cumorah by its Jaredite name, *Ramah*. This was also the name of a town on the border between the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah (between the tribal lands of Ephraim and Benjamin) and was the site of many battles between these tribes and nations. It is interesting to wonder just how ancient the name is and from what language it was derived.

The anonymous "Book of Mormon" and Minnie Hodapp's "Angel-Guarded Book of Gold" were published in 1909 and 1930. Both center on the record and its coming forth rather than on Cumorah itself. "Book

of Mormon” is more exhortative, urging all the world to gather around its standard. Words such as *Hail!* and the alternation of masculine and feminine rhyme give a sense of excitement, movement, and rapid progress. An interesting line is “Buy the truth and sell it not,” reminding us of Isaiah 55:1, where the gospel is likened to everyday commodities: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

“Angel-Guarded Book of Gold,” on the other hand, is a gentle, contemplative poem, feeling like a prayer or the pronouncement of a blessing:

Angel-guarded book of gold
Daily strength and comfort lend;
Fraught with blessings manifold,
Like a joy-confiding friend.

“Cumorah Hill,” by J. M. White, and “The Solitary Scribe,” by Frank C. Steele, are narrative poems published in 1915 and 1919, respectively. “Cumorah Hill” is essentially rhyming prose. The first stanza tells the story of the Nephites’ final battle, the hiding of the records, and the latter-day retreat of the Lamanites before “more mighty foes.” The second stanza tells of Joseph Smith’s prayer and first vision, the coming of Moroni, and the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. The poem has a simple a-b-a-b rhyme scheme, and the last four lines of the poem are tied to the first by the use of the same end-rhyming sounds.

“The Solitary Scribe” does not rhyme. The poet uses images of nature and the seasons to create the desired mood for his story. Thus the story, starting just after the Nephites’ last great battle, is set at the beginning of a cold night in early winter.

Shadows and silence fall o’er the earth,
As the sun, veiled in gath’ring clouds, dips low in
the West.
A chilling wind sweeps up from the great Eastern
Waters,
Its biting breath the herald of bleak Winter’s wrath.

The overwhelming presence of death and evil is represented by

the screech of hawk and vulture,
Soaring and dipping like pirate frigates
On the maddened main.

Later, in the description of Moroni, we see images of light recur:

He pauses—his eyes turn from the shining plates
Toward the leaning flames, which ’luminate
A visage, strong and finely-cut, softened with sorrow,
And furrowed with some mighty tragedy;
Two deep-set eyes that flash forth fire, then melt
with love,
As yearningly they turn aloft for Light.

And at the end of the night, as morning approaches, Steele points out that this new day is also the dawn of idolatry:

The sun-god, climbing out of orient seas,
Proclaims the doom of Night, the birth of Day.

Ruth May Fox’s “Cumorah” (1923) and Willard Bishop’s “Moroni’s Visit” (1925) tell essentially the same story. The coming of Moroni to Joseph Smith led to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the fulness of the gospel. Willard Bishop walks us through the story at a stately, dignified pace, reminding us on the way that Moroni was the angel that John the Beloved saw flying “in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6). Fox’s poem darts into and out of the story, raising on the way a triumphant banner for the restoration. The rhythms she uses in the poem, the patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables, varying from line to line and within lines, create a picture of a Christian soldier dancing confidently into war. Half the stanzas start by giving orders to the enemy:

Away! Away with your ancient lore. . . .
Behold, ye scoffers! . . .
Look once again at Cumorah’s hill. . . .

And the poem ends with a joyful statement of inevitable victory:

The Book goes forth on its shining way
Nor earth nor hell its power can stay.

“Memories of Cumorah,” by Roger Howey, published in 1927, and “Voice of Cumorah,” by Jo

Adelaide Stock, published in 1946, use as few and as simple words as possible to convey a powerful message. Howey addresses the hill using the language of prayer and invites it to recount its history. One hundred years have passed, he reminds us, since

thou didst yield,
To guard and shield,
To Joseph Smith, at God's behest,
Those treasured plates of gold.

"Voice of Cumorah," in contrast, is written in first person. Here the "trial and tears," while acknowledged, are downplayed; the emphasis instead is placed on treasure, blessings, and reward. With joy, the hill delights in its blessedness:

To every saint o'er land and sea
I am a shrine!

"Seed of Promise," by Betty Ventura, published in 1959, is a sonnet. Comprising 14 lines, it is written in iambic pentameter—10 syllables to a line, alternating stressed and unstressed, ending each line with a stressed syllable. This sonnet is divided into an octet (the first 8 lines) and a sestet (the last 6). The octet reveals the tragedy of the destruction of the Nephite nation—

The golden age is o'er, the record sealed

—while the sestet holds promise for the future:

That they, the once rebellious blood, might stand—
Where once stood Lehi's other sons—and bear
Their father's witness in a Gentile land.

We note the ambiguity of the word *father* here, as it can refer to a mortal or the eternal father.

Dale Bjork's "Those Quiet Rolling Woods," published in 1976, is at once appealing and disturbing. It describes one quiet hour at Cumorah when Moroni buried the plates, and it leaves the reader wanting more. This sense of incompleteness is partly due to the structure of the piece—the entire poem comprises one fragment of one sentence. And



Betty Ventura composed the poem "Seed of Promise."

just as the end of the poem comes without the completion of the sentence, so we know that the burial of the plates, and in a sense the burial of Moroni's people, is not the end of the story.

The last and most recent poem in the collection, "Moroni," by Donnell W. Hunter, was published in 1987. It too is set in the time of the burial of the plates. Looking back on the history of the Jaredites and the Nephites, the poet laments their hate-filled hurtling toward Cumorah. And while the conclusion clearly refers to the two great journeys from Babel and Jerusalem,

it has a universality that includes all those who have found the restored gospel. The great prophet Lehi declared that "there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:6). So it is true for all Latter-day Saints, and particularly for those living in America that

we came
led by that same hand
through desert sand
and over seas
until fulfilling forecast destinies
we found Cumorah.

To explore these poems is to embark on a pilgrimage through the sacred history of the Hill Cumorah. Our hearts and our minds open, and we find ourselves sitting on that steep hillside, watching the fierce battles, feeling the sorrow of Moroni as he buries the golden plates, and witnessing the joy and wonder of Joseph Smith as he unearths them. From this vantage point we can gaze, too, toward the future, wondering what other great scenes this hill will yet behold and what depth of understanding a new generation of poets will bring to us. 

THE POEMS

1. An Angel Came Down

An angel came down from the mansions of glory,
And told that a record was hid in Cumorah,
Containing the fulness of Jesus's gospel;
And also the cov'nant to gather his people.

O Israel! O Israel!
In all your abidings,
Prepare for your Lord
When you hear these glad tidings.

A heavenly treasure; a book full of merit;
It speaks from the dust, by the power of the Spirit;
A voice from the Savior that saints can rely on,
To prepare for the day when he brings again Zion.

O Israel! O Israel!
In all your abidings,
Prepare for your Lord
When you hear these glad tidings.

Listen O isles, and give ear ev'ry nation,
For great things await you in this generation:
The kingdom of Jesus, in Zion, shall flourish;
The righteous will gather; the wicked must perish.

O Israel! O Israel!
In all your abidings,
Prepare for your Lord
When you hear these glad tidings.

(By W. W. Phelps, in "New Hymns,"
Evening and Morning Star, February 1833)

2. An Angel From on High

An angel from on high,
The long, long silence broke;
Descending from the sky,
These gracious words he spoke:
Lo, in Cumorah's lonely hill
A sacred record lies concealed.

Sealed by Moroni's hand,
It has for ages lain,
To wait the Lord's command,
From dust to speak again.
It shall again to light come forth,
To usher in Christ's reign on earth.

It speaks of Joseph's seed,
And makes the remnant known
Of nations long since dead,
Who once had dwelt alone.
The fulness of the Gospel, too,
Its pages will reveal to view.

The time is now fulfilled,
The long expected day;
Let earth obedience yield,
And darkness flee away;
Remove the seals, be wide unfurled
Its light and glory to the world.

Lo, Israel filled with joy,
Shall now be gathered home,
Their wealth and means employ
To build Jerusalem.
While Zion shall arise and shine,
And fill the earth with truth divine.

(By Parley P. Pratt, in George D. Pyper, "The
Story of Our Hymns," *Improvement Era* 39,
no. 10 [October 1936])

3. An Acrostic

Buried in dust, I lay
On yonder mountain top,
On earth I could not stay,
Kind heaven hid me up.
O! may I yet come forth,
For man's deliverance stand,
Make nations from the north
O'erspread this promised land;
Rejoice with Israel's race,
Make this their dwelling place,
On earth to see His face,
No more to sin.

(By Phineas H. Young, in *Millennial Star*, 7 May 1853)

4. Cumorah

One of time's sublimest pages
Annal thy prophetic dawn,
Voice of the unstoried ages,
Tombstone of their nations gone!

Twice a people's last protection,
Twice the witness of a world
In the arms of insurrection,
To prophetic ruin hurled.

Now you come, a flood of glory
Streaming o'er your visage old:
With their prehistoric story
Written on your heart of gold;

Teeming with the gospel leaven,
Lifted by an angel hand,
In the very light of heaven,
To the eyes of every land.

Ramah of the ancient nation,
The Cumorah of the last,
From your bosom comes salvation,
And the story of the past!

(By Theodore E. Curtis, *Improvement Era* 12,
no. 5 [March 1909])

5. Book of Mormon

Book of Mormon, hid for ages,
In Cumorah's lonely hill;
Written by those ancient sages
Whom Jehovah taught His will;
Glad we hail it,
Fulness of the Gospel still.

Hail the record, Saints of Zion,
Hidden by Moroni's hand,
Till the God our souls rely on,
Unto Joseph gave command
To translate it,
Send it forth to every land.

Hail the glorious light of Nephi,
Hail the truth that Alma taught;
We will trust in God like Lehi;
Seek the Lord as Mormon sought;
Like Moroni,
Buy the truth and sell it not.

Israel, gather 'round this standard,
Laman, see thy guiding star,
Judah, rally 'round thy banner,
Come, ye Gentiles from afar;
Book of Mormon,
It is truth's triumphal car!

(By unacknowledged author, in *Liahona, the Elder's Journal*, 6 November 1909)

6. Cumorah Hill

Fierce raged the fight; a wild, barbarian horde,
Thirsting for blood, surged like a stormy sea,
Around a little band, wielding the spear and sword,
Seeking to live and evermore be free,
Fast fell they there, as grass before blade,
Until but one remained, who then in deep despair,
By night, in secret there, the tribal records laid,
Then died alone, last of his nation there.
The stately centuries in slow procession passed,
Safely, the record, in security on the hill reposed,
New cities rose, and the Lamanites at last,
Retreated in their turn before more mighty foes,
New sects, new creeds, in clash of bitter strife,
Proclaimed most brazenly, "Ours is way to go;"
Each heaping curses on the others rule of life,
While multitudes looked on, anxious the truth to know.

"Which one is right?" this query frequent came
To Joseph's mind, when to the inquiring quest,
Came answer, like the lightning's dazzling flame,
Piercing the cloud, and Joseph then found rest,
"If any man doth wisdom lack, let him ask of God,"
This promise old, he trusted, and in the grove,
Fervently he called, upon the emerald sod
And then in answer, came the messengers of love.
"Join none of them," came the commandment clear,

And at a later day, Moroni, glorious, came
With his grand revelation, to the obedient seer,
Who felt with heaven's fire, his soul aflame.
At last the records were unto the world restored,
And now in distant lands and islands of the sea,
Still goes the message, a potent living word,
A sign and wonder to all men, forevermore to be.

(By J. M. White, in *Liahona, the Elder's Journal*, 16 February 1915)

7. The Solitary Scribe

Shadows and silence fall o'er the earth,
As the sun, veiled in gath'ring clouds, dips low in the West.
A chilling wind sweeps up from the great Eastern Waters,
Its biting breath the herald of bleak Winter's wrath.
Sloping gently from Cumorah's hill,
The timbered landscape, delved with ditches deep,
Falls into brooding obscurity.
A strange, unhallowed stillness fills the world:
No voice of husbandman or wife—nor song of children
Falls on the ear. None but the voice of winds,
Rocking the leafless branches of the trees;
And the screech of hawk and vulture,
Soaring and dipping like pirate frigates
On the maddened main.
In a cavern, man-made for refuge,
In Cumorah's southward side, a log is blazing,
Casting furtive shadows o'er the gray interior.
A stone of bulk and smoothness rests near the fire,
And on it sits a figure deep in thought—and writing
With a deftness born of master hand and mind.

He pauses—his eyes turn from the shining plates
Toward the leaning flames, which 'luminare
A visage, strong and finely-cut, softened with sorrow,
And furrowed with some mighty tragedy;
Two deep-set eyes that flash forth fire, then melt with love,
As yearningly they turn aloft for Light.
Who is this man of grief, secreted and alone,
and wrapt in thought?
Alas, 'tis he—sole remnant of his race—
Moroni, the Solitary Scribe.

Moroni, the seer, the prophet, prophet's son;
Moroni, the well-beloved of God;
Chosen and blessed through triumph in less lofty spheres;
Exalted through the conquest of himself,
And faith unfailing in the Living God,
The God of Lehi, Nephi, Alma and his noble sire.
This is Moroni, hidden from the prowling Lamanites,
Who seek his life because of savage hate.
Their hosts have triumphed on the battle-field,
And Nephite men, both small and great,
Bowmen, spearmen, swordsmen, captains—all,
Now lie in rotting heaps upon the earth.
Their wives, fair daughters of the once proud Zarahemla,
Are cold in death, ravished and slain;
Their children, victims of the curse and innocent,

Have fallen 'neath the warm, wet sword,
Forced to suffer for parental sin.

Erase the awful scene, O God of Heaven!
This grim reminder of a nation's guilt.
Would that it might be hid eternally
Beneath the wreck and ruin of a race.
But this, alas, can never be.
The Past must needs be bared
To guide the children of the Present Day,
Who, if they ape the foolish dead,
Must in the future reap the same reward.
History's a monument of enduring Truth—
Austere it stands, the woe and weal of Time:
Its base the bones of empires built by Might;
Its shaft the souls of martyrs slain for Right;
Its pinnacle the fadeless Star of Bethlehem.

So, from the pen inspired of this sad scribe,
The chapters grow, writ in imperishable gold.
The hours advance, and in the cloudy sky
The wan, white moon moves silent in its course.
Midnight passes; the scribe still writes;
The first faint glow of dawn
Fringes the eastern heavens.
And with the falling of the morning dew,
The task is finished. The plates engraved
Are sealed for purposes best known to Him
Who rules in wisdom, majesty and power.
Sealed by Moroni, sealed with scalding tears
That spring from a heart torn open-wide with grief—
Grief for his brethren now in Paradise,
Waiting in fearful agony the eye of God.
O Man, a fearful, burning hell is thine indeed,
If, after drinking deep the nectar of the spheres,
Thou turnest to the wine of luxury and lust and war—
Lurid phantoms, dreams that perish, wild deliriums
That beckon to the abyss of despair.
O Man, debased, they wine so sweet to quaff,
Becomes as wormwood to thy dry, parched lips.

The fire burns low—the embers slowly die—
The sun-god, climbing out of orient seas,
Proclaims the doom of Night, the birth of Day.
From out the cavern stealthy steals the scribe,
Bearing the precious records of his race.
His eyes free scan the landscape, and his steps
Turn toward the sturdy cavity of stone.
Therein are placed the sacred plates of gold,
The sword of Laban and the shield,
The Thummim of the Seers, a gift from God,
There to repose until Jehovah's voice
Shall call them forth.

Moroni's task is done. The plates are now secure;
A cloud is lifted from his weary countenance.
He kneels in fervent prayer, then draws his robe
About him. And with hasty step
He leaves Cumorah by a winding path.
And in a moment more the Solitary Scribe is lost
to view—

Lost in the forest's unfrequented depths,
There, till the summons Home shall come,
He roams the melancholy earth alone with God.

(By Frank C. Steele, in *Improvement Era* 12,
no. 4 [February 1919])

8. Cumorah

Away! Away with your ancient lore,
We have one Bible, we'll brook no more;
The canon of scripture is all complete,
The wisdom of ages lie at our feet;
Since Science has turned her gilded key
All that has been, all that shall be,
Will swiftly unfold, no need appears
For new revelation, for prophets or seers.

So said the wise, with a haughty smile,
While the youthful seer their lips revile;
The meek and lowly saw dreams fulfilled—
"The Lord is God," every doubt was stilled.

But right is might, 'spite the world's dark frown,
As ever Truth wears a jeweled crown;
Though viciously hurled from her rightful throne,
Triumphant she comes into her own.

Behold, ye scoffers! yon sacred mound
The site of an ancient battle-ground,
Where nations, forgetful of God and man,
Fought to the death. Their red blood ran
'Til a race was drained; one man alone
Survived the carnage; with sorrow prone
Moroni buried the records deep,
With a prayer to God that the earth should keep
Them safe for the remnant of the land,
Should a few be spared of that stricken band;
That the faith of their fathers, their woes, their pain,
Might preserve the children from sin's deep stain.

Look once again at Cumorah's hill
Where the morning beams their radiance spill
On Joseph's face; through the golden light
He looks on the form of an angel bright,
With the sheen of heaven, who gives him the plates—
The golden leaves which open the gates—
Of mystery. The records teem
With words prophetic—a living stream
Concerning this land—Moroni's land
Which God preserved with an outstretched hand,
That here His banner might be unfurled
Which should wave good cheer to a failing world.

The Book goes forth on its shining way
Nor earth nor hell its power can stay.
An immortal man, a mortal youth
Ordained to flood the world with truth.

(By Ruth May Fox, in *Relief Society Magazine*,
August 1923; reprinted by permission, The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

9. Moroni's Visit

A hundred years have passed
Since down unto the world
An angel came from God,
The gospel flag unfurled;
The gospel flag of peace,
Proclaiming unto men
The time was close at hand
When Christ would come again.

He unto Joseph spake,
Instructions to him gave;
Revealed the gospel plan
A dying world to save,
And told of records rare
Hid in Cumorah's hill,
That now should be revealed
The prophets to fulfil.

A prophet warrior he,
This angel who now came,
He once had lived on earth,
Moroni was his name,
He was the messenger
Whom John beheld would fly
Through heaven's vast expanse
And loud to men would cry.

Joseph his words did heed
Although but then a youth,
With zeal he worked, until
He gave his life for truth:
And now we thank our God
As we our voices raise
To testify these truths,
And speak Jehovah's praise.

(By Willard Bishop, in *Improvement Era* 28,
no. 7 [May 1925]; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

10. Hail, Cumorah! Silent Wonder

Hail, Cumorah! silent wonder
Of the hidden ages gone;
Lo, the foot print of the thunder
Bares your treasure to the dawn.

And Moroni, clothed in glory
Crowns your visage old,
To reveal the ancient story
Written on your heart of gold.

Twice a people's last protection!
Twice a witness of a world,
In the arms of insurrection,
To prophetic ruin hurled:

Ramah, of the ancient nation,
Dawns thy day at last,

From your bosom comes salvation
And the story of the past.

(By Theodore E. Curtis, in *Latter-Day Hymns*
[1927]; reprinted by permission, The Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

11. A Nation Speaks From Out the Dust

Rejoice, O Earth! while tempests rage,
The Dispensation's early morn
Brings forth a wonder of the age—
A modern miracle is born!

One hundred years have passed away
Since pillowed in celestial flame,
To Ramah's slopes, dethroning day,
The angel of the record came.

To Joseph, God's anointed Seer,
He gave the Book of Mormon old
That lay reposed from year to year
There in Cumorah's virgin mold.

A nation speaks from out the dust!
Let Joseph's scattered seed rejoice!
The pages of that sacred trust
Are vibrant with Jehovah's voice.

His words of life are written there;
His promises and precepts old;
And gems of hidden wisdom rare
Adorn that sacred book of gold.

Sweet with the voice of hallowed Seers
From age to hoary age it lay,
The story of forgotten years
And struggling nation passed away,

To issue forth in latter days
From ancient Ramah's sacred sod,
To reconcile a darkened race
And vindicate the ways of God.

(By Theodore E. Curtis, in *Improvement Era* 30,
no. 11 [September 1927]; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

12. Memories of Cumorah

O little hill, thy name scarce known,
Had'st thou but tongue to tell
How on thy slopes,
'Midst forlorn hopes,
The Jaredites in thousands fell,
Till none were left to mourn.

Thou could'st recount the story true,
That sad and awful end,
Of Nephi's race,
Upon thy face;

With prophet, relative, and friend,
All slain within thy view.

Tell of Moroni on thy crest,
Mourning for friend and foe;
Custodian great,
Of inscribed plate,

He brought, and there did bury low
And hide within thy breast.

Of all the scenes thou could'st unfold
To us, we'd like this best:
When thou did'st yield,
To guard and shield,
To Joseph Smith, at God's behest,
Those treasured plates of gold.

One hundred years have passed away
And gone beyond recall;
Yet our bosoms swell,
When'er we tell
Of TRUTH restored for one and all
In God's appointed way.

(By Roger Howey, in *Improvement Era* 30,
no. 11 [September 1927]; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

13. Historic Ramah's Verdant Slope

The nation crumbled and its sun went down,
The blighting shadows of iniquity
Rolled o'er the crowning splendor of the land
As night succeeds the glory of the day.
Last of a seeric line, Moroni sealed
And buried deep in lone Cumorah's hill
The golden record of his vanished race.
Replete with prophecy and luminous
With truth it lay, while down the lapse of time
The aloes bloomed and drooped and passed away.
Wide o'er the land night's rayless curtain fell
And rampart wall, the ornate citadel,
Passed into hopeless ruin and decay.
The dusky Lamanites, whose heritage
Was ignorance, surged up and down the earth
Like clashing billows of an angry sea.
Then gray-eyed dawn poured up a shaft of light
Across the starry empire of the night,
And, with the ancient standard high unfurled,
God's flow'ring purpose ripened o'er the world.
Among the glories of the new born day
Cumorah's mighty sentinel appeared
Robed in a light that paled the mid-day sun.
To Joseph he revealed the book, and there,
There on historic Ramah's verdant slope
The youthful seer received the sacred charge.
'Twas prophecy's fulfilment, that a race
Brought low should speak as from the silent dust.

(By Theodore E. Curtis, in *Improvement Era* 31,
no. 3 [January 1928]; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

14. Angel-Guarded Book of Gold

Angel-guarded Book of Gold
Hidden in Cumorah's hill,
Human eyes at length behold,
Brought to light by heaven's will.

Lo, God's mighty power unseals—
Eager hearts rejoice to know
Truths the mighty Seer reveals
From the long and long ago.

Sacred record choice and fair
Unto every land and clime,
To God's children everywhere
With a message rare, sublime!

Angel-guarded book of gold,
Daily strength and comfort lend;
Fraught with blessings manifold,
Like a joy-confiding friend.

Guide, illumine and inspire
With a sweet, unfaltering trust;
Voice of love that cannot tire,
Lowly whispering from the dust!

(By Minnie I. Hodapp, in *Liahona, the Elder's
Journal*, 29 April 1930; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

15. Voice of Cumorah

I am a hill of stone and clay,
Of grass and tree;
A sacred record, ancient, lay
Hidden in me!

The earth which long my treasure kept
Is holy earth;
Within my bosom close it slept
Until its birth.

To me a righteous prophet gave
The work of years;
To keep, to cherish and to save
Through trial and tears!

I've felt the blessed holy tread
Of Angels' feet!
I heard the words Moroni said,
And oh, how sweet!

Call me thrice blessed! Hark to me!
Reward is mine!
To every saint o'er land and sea
I am a shrine!

(By Jo Adelaide Stock, in *Relief Society Magazine*,
April 1946; reprinted by permission, The Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

16. Seed of Promise

At Cumorah's close, like shattered stone,
Ten thousand Nephite warriors strew the field.
The golden age is o'er, the record sealed:
Moroni walks a wilderness alone.

Gone the prophet-kings, the loyal few,
Gone those of burning faith, contriteness, trust—
White templed cities crumble into a dust
Where kneeling throngs their Savior's blessing knew.

But yet shall Mormon's record be unearthed,
That to Lehi's seed it might declare
The destiny and honor of their birth;
That they, the once rebellious blood, might stand—
Where once stood Lehi's other sons—and bear
Their father's witness in a Gentile land.

(By Betty Ventura, in *Improvement Era*, 62,
no. 10 [October 1959]; reprinted by permission,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

17. Those Quiet Rolling Woods

Those quiet, rolling woods,
Where the weight of silence, lifted
Only by the swirling of crisp leaves
Stirred by demurring winds,
Hung like a battered shield
Over the bare-armed trees,
Over the brown and soundless hills—
Where the sky, like a veil, a thin grey hush,
Was drawn over a pale and passing sun
That sank like the breast of a wounded dove—
Where Moroni knelt as if in prayer
And buried his people beneath the trees,
Buried them all in one small grave
Sealed by a stone and crisp, curling leaves.

(By Dale Bjork, *Ensign*, March 1976; reprinted
by permission, The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints)

18. Moroni

The stone now rests in place,
its edges carefully concealed in turf
as if unturned since Ramah times
when first this hill heard battle cries,
first felt the heavy marching feet
of armed and angry men
who fought like giants
one week's war—
till only one survived,
his headless foe beneath his fainting feet.
Why must men hurtle here in hate,
eager to find a foretold fate
on Cumorah?
The records in place,
hidden in the cave below
and in them all our work—
our lives.
From towered Babel,
walled Jerusalem,
we came
led by that same hand
through desert sand
and over seas
until fulfilling forecast destinies
we found Cumorah.

(By Donnell W. Hunter, *Ensign*, June 1987;
reprinted by permission, The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints)

39. Some may regard this aspect of Clark's assessment as overly enthusiastic. Larson's language is epic in cast, not "lifelike" in the sense of common, everyday speech. But it is life-affirming and powerful in its ability to project the terrible conflicts that come to each of us as a result of our being "free to choose liberty and eternal life, . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:27).
40. Larson, *Coriantumr*, 71.
41. *Ibid.*, 7.
42. Merrill Bradshaw, *Coriantumr* (incomplete opera on a play by Clinton Larson, first scene only: "Sarah's Soliloquy"), an unpublished voice/piano manuscript copy resides in the Music Division of BYU's Harold B. Lee Library.
43. Larson, *Coriantumr*, 11. Bradshaw's text differs in the last two lines from the published play, which gives the following: "The broad plains and the rivers, alone as the unbreathing Trees in the heavy days of our travelling here."
44. There is yet another possibility, one that is always a potential problem when attempting to deal with a fictional mise-en-scène. Perhaps the anachronisms and misconceptions in Larson's script, laid bare through later research in the second half of the 20th century, ultimately made him uncomfortable with the material.
45. *Moroni* was the first of three theatrical works sponsored by the Promised Valley Playhouse (at that time a cultural appendage of the church) to educate and inspire through music and drama. The second was on the life of Christ and the third on Joseph Smith.
46. Prefatory note from the script published by the Promised Valley Playhouse, Salt Lake City, 1977.
47. Carma Wadley, "Hand of Mormon' a monumental task," *Deseret Morning News*, Sunday, 31 August 2003, sec. E1.
48. Another recent addition to the genre is Meredith R. Taylor's *Abinadi* (2003), an opera on the well-known Book of Mormon prophet.
49. See Robertson Wilson, "Leroy Robertson and the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*," 4–13.
50. Former Tabernacle organist Robert Cundick's doctoral thesis, for example, was an extended work for chorus and orchestra, "The Song of Nephi" (1955), completed under Robertson's tutelage at the University of Utah. Cundick had copied the parts for the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* and thus had a first-hand acquaintance with the score.
51. Taylor, *Coriantumr*, manuscript copy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Taylor's prolific output also includes several symphonies with Book of Mormon themes, including symphonies 4 and 7, which contain excerpts from *Coriantumr*.
52. Darwin Wolford, *The Land of Joseph*, BYU–Idaho, Dept. of Music (Rexburg, ID: unpublished, 1976). Wolford was one of a number of Robertson's composition students. Robertson taught at BYU and the University of Utah in the 1930s through the 1960s.
53. Darwin Wolford and Mabel Jones Gabbott, *Song from Cumorah* (Orem, UT: Jackman Music, 1980).
54. Melanie Hoffman and Marvin Payne, *Scripture Scouts, Musical Adventures in the Book of Mormon, The Wonderful Book of Gold* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 1987, 1992). The entire series contains 30 episodes, each with its own song.
55. Steven Kapp Perry and Brad Wilcox, *From Cumorah's Hill: The Book of Mormon Speaks to Our Day* (Provo, UT: Prime Recordings, 1990).
56. Margaret Smoot, *Voices from the Dust* (unpublished, 1990).
57. Jeff Goodrich, *I Heard Him Come and Other Songs about the Savior* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book). Direct inspiration for this piece is attributed by the composer to John 1:11–13 and Doctrine and Covenants 93:1–2, but the doctrine of Christ as taught in Moroni 10:32 seems even more apt and is certainly reflected in the text.
- Look Once Again at Cumorah's Hill: The Poets' View**
Louise Helps
1. These poems are similar to each other. One was clearly a reworking of the other.
- The Hill Cumorah Monument: An Inspired Creation of Torleif S. Knaphus**
Allen P. Gerritsen
1. Torleif S. Knaphus, "Description of the Hill Cumorah Monument," ca. 1935, in possession of the author. In a few instances, the punctuation and spelling in quotations from Knaphus's writings have been normalized.
 2. Torleif Knaphus, *Personal Journal of Torleif S. Knaphus*, trans. Brit Woodbury, unpublished document in the author's possession, 2.
 3. *Personal History of Torleif Knaphus*, as dictated to Linda Knaphus, 1957, in the author's possession, 4.
 4. Rowan Taylor, *Coriantumr*, 3.
 5. For more on Knaphus and his youth, see William G. Hartley, "Torleif Knaphus, Sculptor Saint," *Ensign*, July 1980, 10–15.
6. *Improvement Era*, April 1935, 200.
 7. "The Life of Torleif Severin Knaphus," unpublished autobiography, Family and Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
 8. Torleif S. Knaphus, "Work Done for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," date unknown, list in the author's possession.
 9. LaVar Wallgren (craftsman who made the casts), personal interview, May 2001.
 10. Concerning the identity of this angel, Rebecca Bean remarked, "I say 'angel,' [but] I don't know. I asked Brother Knaphus, when he told me the story, if it was the Angel Moroni that came to him. He said, 'Sister Bean, that's my secret.' But I really feel that it was the Angel Moroni who came [to him]" (Rebecca Bean, fireside address given in Salt Lake City in 1964. This address appears under the title "The Mormons Return to Palmyra" at <http://joda.cis.temple.edu/~nichols/drhaws/hpalmyra.html> [accessed July 2004]).
 11. Rebecca Bean, fireside address.
 12. According to Rebecca Bean's account, the angel, in response to Torleif's prayer about which of the seven drawings to take to the Brethren, told him which drawing was the right one. This raises the question of why Torleif presented all seven drawings to the Brethren and not just the designated one. This matter is resolved in the following account: "When the sculptor inquired [of the angel] how he should confront the Brethren with this choice [the sketch that the angel's finger pointed to] (inasmuch as they were the ones making the decision), he was instructed that they would choose the one the Lord had chosen." Rand H. Packer, "History of Four Mormon Landmarks in Western New York: The Joseph Smith Farm, Hill Cumorah, the Martin Harris Farm, and the Peter Whitmer, Sr., Farm" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 31–32.
 13. Antone Clark, "Finding the Face of an Angel," http://www.ezratclark.org/familyfile_findingthefaceofanangel.asp (accessed July 2004).
 14. Knaphus, "Work Done for the Church."
 15. Marie Knaphus James (Torleif's daughter), personal interview, September 2003.
 16. The text on the plaque is nearly identical to Torleif's description that appears in his "Description of the Hill Cumorah Monument," 23 June 1935, in the author's possession.
 17. Knaphus, "Description of the Hill Cumorah Monument."
18. John D. Giles, "The Symbolism of the Angel Moroni Monument—Hill Cumorah," *Instructor*, April 1951, 99.
 19. Marie Knaphus James, personal interview, September 2003.
 20. Kit Poole, "Missionary sees family image in statue of the Angel Moroni," *Church News*, 15 January 1994, 12.
 21. This and other details are taken from Clark, "Finding the Face of an Angel," posted on the Ezra T. Clark family Web site. See n. 13 above.
 22. Clark, "Finding the Face of an Angel."
 23. Torleif S. Knaphus, "The Call—Brief Description and Impressions of My Trip," unpublished document in the author's possession, June 1934.
 24. Knaphus, "The Call."
 25. Byron Warner, "Statue Makes a Left Turn," *Church News*, 17 April 1976, 3.
 26. Journal History of the Church, 21 July 1935, "Monument Dedicated," United Press, clipping taken from the *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 1935.
 27. Journal History of the Church, July 21, 1935, "Mormons Dedicate Moroni Statue," clipping taken from *Rochester Evening Journal* and the *Post Express*, July 22, 1935.
 28. Knaphus, "Description of the Hill Cumorah Monument."
- The Geologic History of Hill Cumorah**
Michael J. Dorais
1. The 1815 Tambora eruption altered weather patterns around the world, causing the "year without a summer" in 1816 and extensive crop failures in New England.
 2. J. W. Miller Jr., "Variations in New York Drumlins," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62/3 (1972): 418–23.
 3. W. Kenneth Hamblin and Eric H. Christiansen, *Earth's Dynamic Systems*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).
 4. M. Milankovitch, *Kanon der Erdbestrahlung und seine Anwendung auf das Eiszeitenproblem* (Belgrade: Königlich Serbische Akademie, 1941), 133.
 5. Jürgen Ehlers, *Quaternary and Glacial Geology* (Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 1996); I. Peter Martini, Michael E. Brookfield, and Steven Sadura, *Principles of Glacial Geomorphology and Geology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 110–30.
 6. M. E. Ragmo, and W. F. Ruddimann, "Tectonic Forcing of Late Cenozoic Climate," *Nature* 359 (1992): 117–22.