"Woman Arise!": Political Work in the Writings of Lu Dalton

Sheree Maxwell Bench
Brigham Young University - Provo

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"WOMAN ARISE!": POLITICAL WORK IN THE
WRITINGS OF LU DALTON

by
Sheree Maxwell Bench

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English
Brigham Young University
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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Shereé Maxwell Bench

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date: June 10, 2002
Gregory Dallin Clark, Chair

Date: June 13, 2002
Carol L. Madsen, Reader

Date: 10 June 2002
Susan Howe, Reader

Date: 12 June 2002
Grant Boswell, Graduate Advisor

Date: 12 June 2002
Gary Hatch, Area Chair

Date: 19 June 2002
Lance Larsen, Graduate Coordinator
As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Sheree Maxwell Bench in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements, (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

June 10, 2002
Gregory Dalba Clark
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department
Lance Larsen
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College
Van C. Gessel
Dean, College of Humanities
ABSTRACT

"WOMAN ARISE!": POLITICAL WORK IN THE WRITINGS OF LU DALTON

Sheree Maxwell Bench
Department of English
Master of Arts

In 1872, Mormon plural wife, educator, and suffragist Lucinda Lee Dalton began writing fiery political essays and insightful poetry for the Woman's Exponent from her small community in southern Utah. Through her writings Dalton endeavors to shape the opinions of Exponent readers by working within public discourse toward the goal of equality for women. At times both optimistic and troubled, she uses the rhetorical strategies of humor, irony, reason, identification, and persuasion to educate men and women on disparities and to encourage women to participate actively in their own emancipation. She often engages in a dialogical process with other writers by crafting both polemic and poetic responses to specific writings in order to work toward greater insight on critical issues. As an essayist Dalton defends her religion, calls for the expansion of women's political and economic opportunities, and asserts that the elevation
of women is crucial to achieving the potential of both sexes. As a poet she is a compelling writer who reveals in her poems her apprehensions and aspirations, her faith and feminism. Much of her poetry reflects the same commitment to reform that is clear in her essays, and she uses both genres do effective political work. This thesis uses a pluralist approach to recover Lu Dalton as an important early Mormon writer. It articulates her merit as a representative voice by evaluating the historical context and rhetorical function of her published writings in which she actively calls for broad societal reform, writing on women's roles, political rights, and relationship with God and men.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Committee Approval</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Reading Approval and Acceptance</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 “O Womanhood, Waken”: Historical and Cultural Context</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 “Government, People and Privileges”: Essays by L. L. D.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 “Gleams of Light”: Poetry by Lu Dalton</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Selected Poems by Lu Dalton</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Woman's Sphere&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Answer to What Are We Men to Do&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Woman Arise!&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Indian Summer&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Questionings&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To Query, and All My Dear Sisters in Zion&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

A great work of Mormon literature will be like all great works of literature; it will be one that makes me wrestle with my beliefs and which stimulates me by the example of the author’s own effort to re-create my own life on surer grounds of belief.

—Karl Keller, “On Words and the Word of God”

We would call attention to L. L. D.’s “Talk with the Sisters,” which appears in this issue. Read it Sisters, many of you are needing such hints as are therein given, and it contains good food for every intelligent mind.

—Louisa Lula Greene Richards, “Home Affairs”

Echoing Woman’s Exponent editor Lula Greene Richards, I would like to call attention to L. L. D.—Lucinda Lee Dalton, a Mormon woman whose strong, impassioned voice rang clearly from southern Utah between 1872 and 1900 to address issues which faced women within the territory and within the nation. Although she is unfamiliar to modern readers, Dalton’s measured reasoning and spirited writing made her a favorite of nineteenth-century Mormon women. She was a frequent contributor to the Woman’s Exponent, a semimonthly journal published by Mormon women from 1872 to 1914 to correct American and international misconceptions of life in polygamy. Her poems and essays dotted its pages for the first twenty-eight years of its publication in Salt Lake City. A plural wife, educator, and suffragist, Dalton is an insightful woman who is intelligent and articulate, witty and assertive. She is often didactic but rarely sentimental. She writes politically and passionately on a personal level and to a broad audience. A faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she looks to her religion to find the seeds necessary for the elevation of women’s status. At times both optimistic and troubled, she works to advance the cause of women’s equality through public
discourse by writing on women’s roles, political rights, and relationship with God and men.

Early Mormon women such as Dalton have begun to be recognized in the last thirty years for their unique experience and contributions to both history and literature. Scholarship on these women has increased steadily because of historians such as Leonard J. Arrington, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Jill Mulvay Derr, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher. Likewise, the study of Mormon literature has burgeoned with projects by Eugene England, Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert, Bruce Jorgensen, and others. But there has been relatively little consideration of nineteenth-century Mormon women’s writings. Although present in abundance, the women’s poetry has largely remained unexplored, and the little existing criticism is usually ambivalent. Maureen Beecher’s overview of “newspaper verse” from Woman’s Exponent laments Mormon women’s “self-conscious adherence to rhyme and rhythm” (“Poetry and the Private Lives” 56) but values what the poems reveal of the women’s “concept of themselves and their lives” (59). Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert’s appraisal of early LDS poetry in general is lukewarm, calling the majority of it “regrettably forgettable” but acknowledging that a few writers such as Augusta Joyce Crocheron, Josephine Spencer, and “Zion’s poetess” Eliza R. Snow deserve study for their “often good contributions” (A Believing People 177). Two recent articles mark the beginning of a move toward more careful and contextual readings of two of these poets. Josephine Spencer is the focus of an insightful discussion by Kylie Nielson Turley, while historian Jill Mulvay Derr provides an excellent and important cultural studies approach to the poetry of Eliza R. Snow.¹

Analysis of Mormon women’s prose has been haphazard as well. Scholars’ attempts to recover writings have focused mainly on journals, letters, serialized stories from early church publications, and a very few early novels. Works which appeared in Woman’s Exponent are only beginning to be explored. Excepting Carol Madsen’s thesis on the editorial content of the Exponent, which also focuses on its editor Emmeline B. Wells, there has been little research specifically on the numerous essays that appeared in its pages. Most often these essays are cited as historical evidence of the political and religious debate over suffrage and polygamy as can be seen in the work of Janika Isakson and Sherilyn Cox Bennion. Less frequently are the essays evaluated for their social function or literary merit. Some important exceptions are articles by Tarla Rai Peterson and Claudia Bushman, and a thesis by Gail Farr Casterline. Peterson argues that the Exponent works to replace the four virtues of true womanhood—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—with a “triumvirate” of “piety, purity, and independence” ("The Woman’s Exponent" 165). Bushman suggests that Exponent “reports from the field” construct “a Mormon female image in which Mormon women could see themselves as they were and as they should be” (“Reports from the Field” 298). And Casterline argues that Mormon women’s defense of their religion in the pages of Exponent helped them develop a positive self-image to override outsiders’ criticism.2

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to further the discussion of the literary and historical significance of lesser-known Mormon women by looking at the rhetorical function of Lu Dalton’s published writings in which she actively calls for broad societal


reform. It will build on biographical work done by Lavina Fielding Anderson by articulating Dalton’s merit as a representative voice in the dialogue and debate over politics, plural marriage, and women’s roles in American society. Dalton’s contributions appeared regularly in the pages of *Exponent* from its inception in 1872 until her final entry in 1900, and she was well-received as a poet and essayist. It is unclear whether Dalton’s poems were collected and published separately as were those of some of her peers. A brief mention of her in Daughters of Utah Pioneers’ *Heart Throbs of the West* states that she did have a small volume published, but there is no announcement of such a publication in *Woman’s Exponent* as there was for other regular contributors, and research to this point has not located any extant copies. Nevertheless, some individual poems did see national exposure. “The River” was included in a book of representative Mormon women’s poetry and art assembled for the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and “Gleams of Light” and “Longing” appeared in the anthology *Local and National Poets of America* (1890). Locally, two of her works, “Help the Workingwomen” and “Oh Come, Come Away,” were included in the *Utah Woman Suffrage Song Book*, and “Woman, Arise!” appeared in the handwritten Beaver suffrage paper *Equal Rights Banner.* Additionally, Dalton contributed several poems, articles, and a short story to *Young Woman’s Journal* (1889–1929) and at least two poems to *The Contributor* (1879–1896), the publications for the Young Women’s and Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations. A few poems and one story can also be found in *The Juvenile Instructor*.

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3 Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1941) 155.

4 Although bearing the same title, the song “Woman, Arise” which appears in the *Utah Woman Suffrage Song Book* is not Dalton’s but was written by Louisa Greene Richards.
(1866–1929), and some of her poems were reprinted in *Millennial Star* (1840–1937), both of which were Mormon publications.

Because Dalton is writing during the tumultuous historical period in which the topics of women's roles, suffrage, and polygamy were vigorously debated, and because roles for Mormon women were expanded in ways progressive Easterners only imagined, I will use a variety of critical tools offered by Wayne Booth and Kenneth Burke in order to gain a fuller understanding of this woman and her texts. Wayne Booth recommends the pluralist approach as effective, asserting that by choosing diverse, even conflicting theoretical viewpoints, one is able to flesh out added dimensions of meaning in a text. By combining multiple perspectives as Booth suggests, I will work to create a more complete picture of Dalton, the time in which she wrote, and the function of her writing within this context. To accomplish this I will use historical, cultural, literary, and rhetorical perspectives. The work of Kenneth Burke bolsters this approach, asserting that works of art are "couched" in "the language of a specific cultural tradition, and the loss of the tradition is like the loss of the dictionary" (*Counter-Statement* 85, my emphasis).

Dalton's poetry and essays were shaped by her experience as a Mormon woman within a distinctive nineteenth-century frontier culture, and through her public discourse she, in turn, worked to shape the opinion of her audience through a process which Burke calls dialogical. Burke asserts, "A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in co-operative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to views transcending the limitations of each" ("Rhetoric—Old and New" 203).

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5 See *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism*. 
Woman's Exponent provided a unique opportunity for this type of dialogue; indeed, Dalton often crafted direct responses to specific articles and essays printed there, and she and other writers composed poems which responded directly to one another, thereby working toward greater understanding.

Kenneth Burke's rhetorical emphasis will further inform my analysis of Dalton's works as I consider her as a writer, who, in Burke's words, is "engaged in the producing of effects upon [her] readers" (Counter-Statement 190). In this respect I will, as Burke suggests, be "more concerned with how effects are produced than with what effects should be produced" (123, emphasis Burke's). I read Lu Dalton as a deeply spiritual woman who struggles within her writing to reconcile gender-based disparities she both experienced and observed with the egalitarian philosophy she held dear and for which she found support in her religion. She, along with other Mormon women, believed their religion provided them an enlightened view which they were compelled to share in order to help move the world toward Zion. Burke explains, "If the artist's 'revelations' are of tremendous importance to him, he will necessarily seek to ritualize them, to find a correspondingly important setting for them" (168). Dalton's "revelations" were tremendously important to her and the Exponent was the "correspondingly important setting" where she could share insights and work through inconsistencies. Additionally, Burke's expanded definition of rhetoric as identification as well as persuasion will add a further dimension to my discussion of Dalton's effectiveness as a writer ("Rhetoric" 203). Dalton herself uses both approaches, at times reasoning persuasively, and at times asking her audience to put themselves in her place as a female in a limiting nineteenth-century culture and as a Mormon plural wife who wants to practice her religion freely.
Finally, it is important here to set the parameters of my definition of political work. For this I turn to the work of Jane Tompkins and Sharon Harris. In Sensational Designs Tompkins establishes the need to recognize the literary use of domesticity by nineteenth-century women writers to illuminate the importance of women’s contributions to society, thereby demonstrating the political ramifications of women’s domestic role. And in her discussion of the political novel, Harris explains that women’s writing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “conflated the political and the domestic to expose the false constructions of the political that have separated the so-called public and private spheres” (Redefining the Political Novel xx). Harris would therefore expand the definition of “political” writing to include “works that recognize the social consequences of political processes and the political consequences of social processes” (xvi).

Accordingly, my definition of political work recognizes the social, the political, and the domestic as integral facets of one discussion and adds a fourth element that Dalton herself brings—that of spirituality.

This thesis will unfold in three segments. Chapter one will provide the historical, cultural, and religious context for Dalton’s writings in order to convey a sense of the ongoing dialogue of which she was a part. First, this chapter will locate Dalton in the larger context of mid-nineteenth-century women’s literary contributions, pointing out their political nature. Second, it will articulate the distinctive experience of Mormon women, discussing the status and authority they acquired through the organization of the Relief Society and the restoration of temple blessings, their expanded notion of appropriate femininity and widened sphere of involvement, their political activism and public defense of their religion. It will also discuss the conditions of frontier life,
religious instruction to women, the practice of plural marriage, and the Utah suffrage movement. Third, it will consider Dalton specifically, using autobiographical and historical evidence to explore formative childhood episodes and life as a plural wife in an isolated desert community.

Chapter two will first provide a brief background on the Woman's Exponent and its rhetorical purpose and function as a forum for nineteenth-century Mormon women. Second, it will consider the essay as the genre of choice in calling for political and social reform by Mormon women who wanted to add their voices to the larger discussion, believing they were divinely directed to do so. Third, it will examine a selection of Lu Dalton’s political essays in which she defends her faith, calls for the expansion of women’s political and economic opportunities, and asserts that the elevation of women is crucial to achieving the potential of both sexes. I will work to identify what aspects of her writing are the most persuasive and assess their effectiveness. Additionally, because Dalton makes specific references to the American Woman Suffrage Association’s publication The Woman’s Journal, suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and popular newspaper columnist Fanny Fern, I will evaluate these influences in my discussion.

Chapter three will carefully consider selected poems by Dalton within the framework provided by the two previous sections. It will demonstrate what features of her writing make her a compelling poet who reveals in her poetry her apprehensions and aspirations, her faith and feminism. I will make the assertion that much of her poetry reflects the same commitment to reform that is clear in her essays and that her poems do effective political work. I will show how her poetry establishes a literal dialogue with her readers and discover if she is successful at creating the dialectic described by Kenneth
Burke in which each voice “act[s] upon one another” to “lead to views transcending the limitations of each” (“Rhetoric” 203).

Finally, the conclusion will weave the strands of literary, cultural, historical, and rhetorical analysis together and will work to articulate a more complete understanding of Lu Dalton’s writings and to achieve critical insight that would not have been possible using a single perspective. It will also draw conclusions as to the effectiveness of her public statements in the ongoing conversation on social reform. Through this thesis Dalton will emerge as a woman worthy of Keller’s definition of a writer of great Mormon literature: she is a woman whose writing “makes me wrestle with my beliefs” and whose efforts “stimulate me” by her example “to re-create my own life on surer grounds of belief.”
Chapter 1

“O Womanhood, Waken”: Historical and Cultural Context

The world is progressing! O womanhood, waken
And join in the jubilant strain!
The fetters which bound thee now surely are breaking,
And never shall gall thee again.
—Lu Dalton, “The World is Progressing”

I

When Lucinda Lee Dalton penned these lines in 1873, she had reason to feel optimistic about woman’s status in American culture. She could see the seeds of women’s opportunity beginning to sprout, both within her Mormon community and in the nation at large. Democratic movements of late eighteenth-century Europe had brought to light many of the injustices felt by the less privileged, but it was not until the nineteenth century that women in America began to believe their position could actually improve. Without access to formal means of affecting law and policy through elective franchise or public office, nineteenth-century American women used informal methods of conveying their ideas on political matters. Some women bravely mounted the platform to give lectures on abolition and woman suffrage despite the branding of public speaking by women as unfeminine. Many became part of benevolent societies which allowed them to do social work in an appropriately feminine context. Female membership in Christian churches rose dramatically as women experienced a spiritual awakening and discovered within the church a place to speak publicly and to experience a measure of authority. As Martha Bradley and Mary Woodward explain, this “direct contact with sacred space allowed those hungry for social status and recognition to claim alternate sources of
authority in religious leadership roles” (4 Zinas xiii). Still another important method of calling for reform was the printed word.

Educated women took advantage of the accessibility of the press to decry unfair legal and customary restrictions on women’s lives as well as to address the social ills they saw around them. In 1843 Margaret Fuller published her treatise “The Great Lawsuit. Man vs. Men. Woman vs. Women.” in The Dial, arguing there that women should have the same opportunity as men to determine their life’s course. Beginning in 1851 Fanny Fern (Sara Parton) built her reputation as the first American newspaper columnist by writing often humorous articles which, among other things, called for women’s financial independence. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, leaders of the National Woman Suffrage Association, printed The Revolution (1868–1872) to focus on woman suffrage and give national exposure to women’s activities. Lucy Stone and the American Woman Suffrage Association published The Woman’s Journal (1870–1912) with the same goal from a somewhat more conservative perspective. Women’s novels became an important vehicle for social criticism as well. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852) portrayed the devastation of slavery, while Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona (1884) depicted the violent displacement of Native Americans. In 1861 Rebecca Harding Davis revealed what Life in the Iron Mills was like for hundreds of immigrant workers. And in the 1850s Fanny Stenhouse, Maria Ward (pseud.), and many others wrote sensationalized exposés on the Mormon practice of plural marriage, indicting the religion and its leaders. Ironically, it was this practice of plural marriage which in many ways became the catalyst for social change in the lives of Mormon women—the very changes for which Eastern women were working.
Although safely isolated west of the Rocky mountains, Mormon women remained involved in the national conversation on political, social, and religious issues via their own newspaper, the Woman’s Exponent. A key theme addressed within its pages was woman’s place in society, and Lu Dalton was one of the more prolific writers actively discussing it. The topic was central to the journal, with over 21 percent of more than fifteen hundred editorials printed addressing “women and woman’s sphere,” the highest percentage of any subject (Madsen, “Remember the Women” 127). The Exponent gave LDS women a platform from which to articulate their position and assert their rights as women and as Mormons. In order to understand the poems and essays which appeared there, including Dalton’s, one must place them within a context which examines the defining elements of a Mormon woman’s life, a context which reveals a time of awakening womanhood. The prophet Joseph Smith and a new theology, Relief Society and polygamy, Brigham Young and expanded roles, Eliza R. Snow and woman suffrage: These are the threads which stretched nineteenth-century Mormon women like Lu Dalton and wove together the unique pattern of their experience.

The Key to Emancipation

With the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the Mormon or LDS church) in 1830 and later with the restoration of saving ordinances came new insights and revelations concerning the purpose of life and mankind generally, and the role of women specifically.6 As did their Puritan forbears, Mormons

6 These ordinances include not only baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but also sacred temple rites called the endowment which prepare women and men to enter into God’s presence and receive the blessings of exaltation when they leave mortal life. Additionally, members of the Church of Jesus Christ perform these ordinances vicariously for loved ones who have died and have not had a chance to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ in mortality.
taught that women were the spiritual equals of men. But unlike traditional Christianity, Mormonism also taught women they had the potential of becoming as God, achieving exaltation coequal with their husbands (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20). Church founder and prophet Joseph Smith told female members they were entitled to spiritual gifts such as the gift of tongues and the ability to heal the sick through their faith, and the women practiced these gifts liberally. In response to the women’s desire to have their own benevolent society, Smith officially instituted the Female Relief Society in 1842 and declared that the church “was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized” (qtd. in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher 1). Relief Society members enthusiastically responded to Smith’s charge “to look to the wants of the poor;” “to teach the female part of the community,” and “to save souls” (qtd. in Derr, “Eliza R. Snow” 76). A defining moment for the women came when the prophet declared, “I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time” (qtd. in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher 1). For Mormon women this moment ushered in a new era of womanhood and women’s rights, including the right of suffrage. Susa Young Gates, editor of Young Woman’s Journal and granddaughter of Brigham Young, explained Joseph Smith’s role in the process when she exclaimed, “The fearless prophet voice . . . sounded in men’s ears spiritual freedom; and as the very keynote of that universal human right was sex freedom, authority of choice, vested in not a few men nor even in men alone, but in each one alike regardless of creed,

7 Minutes of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, 28 April 1842.
8 Relief Society General Board Minutes 1842–1914, 17 March 1842.
9 Nauvoo Minutes, 28 April 1842.
color or sex” (“What Hath the Century” 71). This understanding of spiritual equality laid the foundation for all of the changes Mormon women worked for in their lives, and they believed the gospel would eventually bring social, legal, and civil parity not only for them but for all women. Later church president George Albert Smith echoed this belief when he said, “When the Prophet Joseph Smith turned the key for the emancipation of womankind, it was turned for all the world” (“Address” 717).

During this same period church members were building a temple in Nauvoo, Illinois, and women especially were anticipating its completion because of the promise of important blessings from sacred priesthood ordinances. Carol Madsen explains that the temple ordinances were particularly significant to these women because “they opened up a new concept of spiritual participation relating to the ‘privileges, blessings and gifts of the priesthood’ which not only enhanced their position in the church but offered limitless potential in the hereafter” (“Mormon Women and the Temple” 83–84). Madsen further states that although the women did not hold ecclesiastical priesthood offices, priesthood blessings and ordinances were inclusive of both men and women. Numerous quotations from early church leaders convey the idea that women shared in priesthood blessings with their husbands through these temple ordinances as is seen in the following statement by Apostle Franklin D. Richards:

I ask any and everybody present who have received their endowments, whether he be a brother Apostle, Bishop, High Priest, Elder, or whatever office he may hold in the Church, What blessings did you receive, what ordinance, what power, intelligence, sanctification or grace did you receive that your wife did not partake of with you? I will answer, that there was
one thing that our wives were not made special partakers of, and that was
the ordination to the various orders of the priesthood which were conferred
upon us. Aside from that, our sisters share with us any and all of the
ordinances of the holy anointing, endowments, sealings, sanctifications
and blessings that we have been made partakers of.

Now, I ask you: Is it possible that we have the holy priesthood and
our wives have none of it? Do you not see, by what I have read, that
Joseph desires to confer these keys of power upon them in connection with
their husbands? I hold that a faithful wife has certain gifts and blessings
and promises with her husband, which she cannot be deprived of except by
transgression of the holy order of God. They shall enjoy what God said
they should. And these signs shall follow them if they believe.

(“Memorial Anniversary” 54)

Women’s full participation in temple priesthood ordinances gave them an equitable place
in the kingdom of God which enhanced their position in the church and in the developing
Mormon culture. Further, a select female group was given the authority to act as
“priestesses” (the nineteenth-century term for temple matron and female ordinance
workers) to officiate in some of these ordinances. But the ordinance which had the
greatest impact on Mormon women’s lives was plural marriage.

The practice of plural marriage was a crucial thread in the Mormon woman’s
experience. As part of the restoration of all things and by divine command, Joseph Smith
in 1841 reinstituted the biblical principle of polygamy, initially teaching only a small
group of male church leaders.\textsuperscript{10} Public announcement of the practice did not come until 1852, but by the time Relief Society was organized in 1842 there were already whisperings that church officials had been taking plural wives. In early Society meetings the members were encouraged to strengthen the moral fiber of the women in the community, which Jill Derr explains meant in part “quieting the potentially explosive rumors of ‘immorality’ connected with the theologically approved but socially unconventional and secretly contracted marriages” (“Strength in Our Union” 161). Both women and men initially had difficulty accepting the new doctrine. Those to whom it was preached reacted in shock and dismay; it deeply offended their standards of morality. Apostle John Taylor felt “it was an appalling thing to do” and testified that “nothing but a knowledge of God, and the revelations of God ... could have induced [him] to embrace such a principle as this” (qtd. in Goodsen, “Plural Wives” 90). Even Brigham Young admitted he wished for the grave when he learned the principle. But after much personal struggle, thought, and supplication to God, many gained a testimony of the truthfulness of the revelation and entered the covenant. Ultimately, though, the practice led to the chain of violent events which left Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum the victims of murder and the Saints as refugees fleeing to the West.

The restored gospel with its gifts of the spirit, women’s organization, and temple ordinances provided Mormon women with a new sense of purpose and spiritual equality and fortified them with the confident sense of self they would need as they faced religious

\textsuperscript{10} The more accurate term for the type of marriage practiced by Mormons is polygyny: one husband with multiple wives. However, I will use the term polygamy here in order to remain consistent with nineteenth-century usage.
persecution, the harsh reality of frontier life, and the arduous task of building God's kingdom in the desert.

**A Wide and Extensive Sphere of Action**

Pioneer life in the Great Basin, polygamy, and the prophet Brigham Young helped to give the women their new understanding of their equality a practical application. Life on the frontier, as Maureen Beecher describes it, of necessity demanded that every member of the community work. But, she explains, the traditional division of labor was still in place as women clung to this ideal as a way of surviving "on the highest level of civilization" of which they were capable under their circumstances ("Women's Work" 281). Therefore, chores such as field work, wood chopping, and home building were done by the women only "under duress" and were "eagerly relinquished" as soon as a man was available to perform the tasks (278). Additionally, though women found they were often called upon to provide economic support for their families as well, Jessie Embry asserts that "few Mormon women, either monogamous or polygamous ... voluntarily worked outside of the home" (*Mormon Polygamous Families* 94).

Nevertheless, Utah women had opportunities to branch out into fields of compensated and uncompensated employment that were still closed to women in the East. This seeming paradox prompted observer Elizabeth Kane to declare, "Thousands of years behind us in some of their customs; in others, you would think these people the most forward children of the age. They close no career on a woman in Utah by which she can earn a living" (*Twelve Mormon Homes* 5). Polygamy was an important factor here as the financial demands of an unusually large family often required wives and daughters to supplement family income through both home production and paid employment even
when a wage earning husband was present. It was also common for men to be absent as they were called on missions away from their families or were in hiding from authorities as tensions between Mormons and the federal government increased. In these cases many wives had need of supporting themselves and their children as well as contributing to the support of their husbands.

The church’s second president Brigham Young emphasized self-sufficiency as the means for survival in the Great Basin wilderness, a view which meant all hands were required to help build the community regardless of sex. Young proclaimed, “If I had my way I would have every man and woman employed in doing something to support themselves,” and he had many jobs in mind for the women (qtd. in Derr, “Woman’s Place” 391). He recommended typesetting and journalism as appropriate occupations along with retailing, stenography, telegraphy, and bookkeeping. Under the auspices of the Relief Society the sisters managed a wheat storage program and a sericulture operation. Young’s sense of propriety led him to call more than a dozen women to attend Eastern medical schools to become professional midwives and doctors; women also established and ran the Deseret Hospital. Women served on the faculty and Boards of Trustees of the Provo Brigham Young Academy, the University of Deseret (now University of Utah), and Brigham Young Academy in Logan (now Utah State). Even the legal profession was opened to females when in 1852 the Utah Legislative Assembly passed a statute which Carol Madsen says “empowered Utah women to act as counsel not only for themselves but for others” (“Sisters at the Bar” 217). General Relief Society president Eliza R. Snow spoke truthfully when she told a group of sisters, “President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness. . . . If
any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least circumscribed in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed ("Female Relief Society" 81). In many ways Mormon women were experiencing sweeping societal changes that Eastern women only hoped for. They even possessed that right for which women back in the states were rallying—the right to vote, which they had been given in 1870. But although they held positions of leadership in the church and community, Mormon women were still part of an organizational structure which required obedience to church leaders and to husbands.

**Freedom and Submission**

Brigham Young's vision of Zion included what Jill Derr characterizes as a "freedom-submission paradox." She defines this label as a vision of "ultimate human liberation to which personal choice and responsibility were integral." But, she continues, "equally necessary for the freedom promised with a knowledge of the truth were obedience and submission to the order of the Kingdom of God, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" ("Woman's Place" 378). Therefore, in Young's understanding both women and men were to be obedient to God's order, and for those who chose to be a part of that order complete independence was not an option. While this is an egalitarian view, holding both men and women to the same standard, Young still placed women within a hierarchical structure which subordinated them to men. Part of this came from conventional nineteenth-century interpretations of Genesis and the apostle Paul.
Young taught the familiar Christian idea that the consequences for Eve’s transgression in the garden applied to all women, namely, that they were to be ruled by their husbands. He defined a faithful woman as one who would say, “It is a law that man shall rule over me; his word is my law, and I must obey him...” (Journal of Discourses 16: 167). He also echoed Paul’s teachings that the husband was to be the head of the woman, declaring, “Let our wives be the weaker vessels, and the men be men, and show the women by their superior ability that God gives husbands wisdom and ability to lead their wives into his presence” (Journal of Discourses 9: 308). While Young exhorted husbands to do this lovingly, men still had the authority to direct the affairs of the family, and wives and children were simply to say “amen.” Vella Evans explains that Joseph Smith’s doctrine that “men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (“Articles of Faith,” Pearl of Great Price 60) was not widely known until the twentieth century, so that “both sexes believed that woman suffered from Eve’s fall” (“Woman’s Image” 102). Moreover, the “rule” of women by men was seen as just one of the many consequences of the Fall over which mankind had no control.

Eliza R. Snow was one who taught that Eve had originally been on the same level as her husband Adam, but that the Fall had created a hierarchical order in mortality. She instructed women that if they would submit to the righteous priesthood authority of their husbands, which she differentiated from the “absolute tyranny” of men, they would redeem themselves from Eve’s curse. She explained, “It was through disobedience that woman came into her present position, and it is only by obedience, honoring God in all the institutions he has revealed to us, that we can... regain the position originally occupied by Eve,” a position of full equality with Adam (“Miss E. R. Snow’s Address”
Specifically she cited plural marriage as one of those institutions, stating that the “precious, sacred principle” was “necessary in the elevation and salvation of the human family—in redeeming woman from the curse, and the world from corruption” (“Sketch of My Life” 17). As Jill Derr explains, Snow believed that the restoration of the priesthood and the gospel held “the power to transform a corrupt world”—in Snow’s words, “the keys to all reform”—and she believed women had a central role in bringing about that reform (qtd. in “Form and Feeling” 19, emphasis Snow’s). But as General Relief Society president, Snow often reminded the sisters that they needed to work within the order set by the church in this life in order to receive their reward in the next. She proclaimed, “Inasmuch as we continue faithful, we shall be those that will be crowned in the presence of God and the Lamb. You, my sisters, if you are faithful, will become Queens of Queens, and Priestesses unto the Most High God. These are your callings. We have only to discharge our duties” (“An Address” 63). Many LDS women consequently worked to overcome the disparity they saw in their local communities and in the broader culture through being both faithful members of their religion and vocal advocates of change.

**High Time to Rise Up**

Eliza R. Snow was the woman at the helm of the Relief Society’s many successful enterprises, and with her leadership Mormon women grew to fulfill her expectations. As previously mentioned, they ran a highly successful grain storage program, financed and built their own meeting halls, established a hospital, and published the *Woman’s Exponent*. Relief Society contributions financed the education of some of those sisters who were called to go to medical school but could not afford to pay. The women even arranged for the care of children in their mother’s absence. The Society provided the
women with a sisterhood and a support system, a network within the church that had begun in Nauvoo and flourished in the West. As the Mormon settlement became less isolated and “Gentiles” (non-Mormons) began moving in, they brought with them their concerns over polygamy—this time coupled with woman suffrage. The role Snow and the Relief Society had played in the lives of LDS women prepared them to take a stand publicly for their religious and political rights in Utah. When the time came to defend themselves against attacks on their way of life, the system of operations was already in place; the sisters were already organized.

The introduction of the Cullom bill in 1869 as a means of enforcing the antipolygamy law of 1862 became the motivation for Eliza Snow’s declaration that it was “high time” for Latter-day Saint women to “rise up in the dignity of our calling and speak for ourselves” (qtd. in Van Wagenen 36). The women of the Great Basin responded with a “great indignation meeting” in the tabernacle to decry the infringement upon their rights as citizens. The meeting held on January 13, 1870 drew approximately five thousand women to hear the female leaders of the church speak out. They used the opportunity to verbally support polygamy and denounce the antipolygamy legislation before congress. Lola Van Wagenen explains that “the Mormon women had come to see polygamy as a women’s rights issue” and also as a “men’s rights” issue (“In Their Own Behalf” 38). Couching it in these terms demonstrated their support for the male hierarchy of the church. Nevertheless, the language was strong as is shown in this quotation from Sarah Kimball: “The bill in question would not only deprive our fathers, husbands and brothers of enjoying the privileges bequeathed to citizens of the United States, but would also deprive us as women of the privilege of selecting our husbands, and against this we most
unqualifiedly protest” (qtd. in *Let the Women Vote*). The women were articulate and emphatic in asserting their right to practice their religion according to the dictates of their conscience. They condemned the bill and called for women across the territory to protest the legislation. Newspaper reporters at the event were surprised to see that Mormon women could indeed speak for themselves and compared the orations heard that day to those of women’s rights leaders in the East (Beeton, *Woman Suffrage* 49). The result was that the territorial legislature granted the women the vote as they had proven they would not use it to work against plural marriage. But this was not the final victory as the women had to reclaim the vote in 1895 after having been stripped of the franchise by the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act, a federal government tactic designed to abolish polygamy.

The Mormon woman of the 1800s saw herself growing in ways she may have only hoped for but not expected. She was not free from having her role prescribed, as was common for women of her day, but she saw within her religious community an expanded definition of appropriate femininity and a widening sphere of activity. It was a sphere of activism that included the defense of her religious practices in public forums such as newspapers and mass meetings. It was a sphere of practicality that cast work outside her home as a religious obligation. She had an exceptional model of womanhood in Eliza R. Snow, a woman who honored priesthood and respected its lines of authority but made full use of her ecclesiastical position to organize programs that served the sisters and inspired them to act in a more expansive role. And most important, the Mormon woman was recognized as a spiritual equal by her church leaders and her God, and she knew her eternal potential. All these threads wove together to create the nineteenth-century Mormon woman’s experience, a pattern of awakening womanhood.
II

Just as Mormon women in general had important defining moments, so too did Lu Dalton. She leaves little information to scholars about her life aside from her essays and poems; there are no journals, and those telling letters she wrote to church leaders cited by Lavina Fielding Anderson in her biographical article on Dalton are now restricted from public use.\footnote{In response to my request to see the letters from Dalton to John Taylor, LDS church archivist Ronald Watt wrote: "These letters are confessional type letters in which Dalton reveals certain improprieties that she knows about. Because of this, we have restricted them, and they are not available for access to the public." Letter dated 26 March 2001.} However, her twenty-five page handwritten autobiographical sketch and family histories written by her descendants help to reveal some of the definitive moments of Dalton’s life—moments which help us to understand this complex woman and her writings. I will briefly outline a few of these here and explore them in further detail later in my discussion of specific works.

Dalton’s life was as complex and full of irony as the woman herself. As a child she was bright and excelled in academic subjects, but schools of her time were substandard and inconsistent with teachers who both helped and hindered her progression. She longed for the freedom and opportunities accorded to boys, but she later found herself grateful that she belonged to “a more respectable class of society” ("Autobiography" 8). As a young woman she was resolved to remain single since she could perceive in marriage no benefit to women which outweighed its burdens, yet she not only married but chose to enter polygamy, a decidedly more challenging form of marriage and one that ultimately brought her heartbreak. She fearlessly contested the inequities in her society and argued tirelessly for the elevation women’s status, yet she was constant in her devotion to a religion from which she received both egalitarian and
hierarchical messages. Dalton’s life is the story of a woman who endured life’s
disappointments and tragedies and remained a strong and faithful Mormon despite them.

She was born Sarah Lucinda Lee on February 9, 1847 on a plantation in Coosa
County, Alabama. Her parents, John Percival Lee and Eliza Foscue, joined the Church of
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Texas in 1849 and made the overland trek to Utah
with one of the many pioneer companies. In 1851 the family moved on to San
Bernardino in a company led by Amasa Lyman and Charles C. Rich. After seven years
they returned to Utah, settling in the small community of Beaver. An intelligent child,
young Lucinda was effectively taught by her school teacher father, a man who was
determined that his children “should not be ignorant—as well as poor” (“Autobiography”
2). When she began attending the public school in San Bernardino at age five, she was
ahead of many of the older students in her class. Her mother was “energetic” about her
children’s education as well, and she sacrificed Lucinda’s help as the eldest daughter (the
second child of thirteen) to allow her to attend school “resolutely” (3). Despite her
parents’ support and encouragement, Lu lamented that her education was “scattered” at
best, though it was all that could be expected in the “mixed and ill-regulated schools of
new countries” (3).

Lu’s early years taught her many lessons about what it meant to be a girl in the
nineteenth century, particularly when it came to getting an education. She recalls:

So long ago as I can remember I longed to be a boy, because boys were so
highly privileged and so free. Thousands of things for which I heard girls
gravely reproved, met only an indulgent smile when done by boys...

Education was offered to them accompanied with bribes, promises and
persuasions, while doled out to girls grudgingly as something utterly wasted, and expected to be of no future use. (7–8)

Her “ravenous hunger for knowledge” was both encouraged and thwarted by her teachers. She praised her first teacher in Utah, a man who saw her potential and tutored her during lunch hours. She writes that he taught her philosophy, botany, and natural history. He led her “through some of the enchanted vales of poesy” and gave her “the first sweet draught” from her passion—music (5). But other teachers were not so supportive. She cites one occasion when she asked a “gentleman teacher” if she was proficient enough to “study algebra with profit.” She recounts, “He replied that it would be wasted time for me to ever study it, because I already had more learning than was necessary for a good housekeeper, wife, and mother which was a woman’s only proper place on earth” (8). This discrimination made Lucinda even more determined to get all the education she could, a process she continued after she became a teacher herself. To her dismay, though, she was barely able to keep ahead of her brightest students, children who had better preparation as schools improved in the territory.

As a young woman Lu recognized that her career as a teacher could financially sustain her and still allow her to nurture and mold young children, so she determined never to “assume the yoke and burden of wifehood” (11). She explains, “I had seen in the married state so much that was disagreeable and humiliating to woman, that I was firmly resolved to remain single” (15). She describes the vision she had of marriage as she watched “radiant” girls waltzing with “devoted” partners at community dances. She “mused” that as the wife of one of those “adoring youths,” a “lovely and carefree” maiden would wear out “not only her youth but her very life, drudging from night until morning
with his ailing baby, only to be looked on by him as an inferior being, designed by nature to serve him” (10–11). Thus, the Mormon doctrine that the highest degree of eternal glory was reserved for married couples was “worse than gall and wormwood” to Lucinda (16). Although she had always desired to reach the “highest heaven,” when she began to consider the teachings of her religion she determined she would rather aspire to a lesser glory of “handmaiden to some satisfied woman” than to be “chief servant in a gentleman’s household” in this life (17).

So it was with some resentment at the age of twenty that she considered the proposal of marriage from Charles Wakeman Dalton, a man nineteen years her senior who already had three wives. In Charles, however, Lucinda found a man with a different view of marriage than what she perceived most men held. He reasoned with her that husband and wife served each other in marriage and that each party is obligated to the other. Using Christ as the example, he pointed out that “to be a servant is not always a degrading thing, but the reverse” (17). Neither did Charles seem to entertain what Lucinda called that “foggy superstition about man’s being created first and consequently best, noblest, and supreme-east” (18). With a new hope that theirs could be the equitable relationship she felt marriage should be, Lucinda agreed to consider Charles’s proposal. After “growing pale and hollow-eyed” from wrestling with the decision, it was finally the profound spiritual witness to both herself and Charles as they prayed together that led Lucinda to consent to become his wife (19). She confesses, “For time alone, as the people of the world marry, I could not and would not, because I considered that in a woman’s case, the burdens and trials of matrimony far exceed its benefits and blessings. Only for the sake of its expected joys in eternity, could I endure its trials through
time..." (19). Her disclaimer proved to be ironic, for although she loved Charles and was a good wife to him, factors including his intemperance during their marriage put Lucinda’s eternal standing into such doubt that she sought a cancellation of their sealing a year after his death, thereby nullifying their eternal union. Despite Dalton’s difficult experience in polygamy, she argued convincingly in the Exponent for the right to this religious practice as well as the rights of women in general. She wrestled with many of the cultural biases around her, including that concept of Eve’s curse. With Eliza R. Snow, she clung to the idea that at some point in time, when all things were restored to their proper order, women would realize their true potential and receive their reward. She understood her religion to be a part of that restoration of order, but she wanted it to occur in this life, not just in the hereafter. Dalton made her devotion to bringing women and men together in a new and equal relationship a central issue in her life as a writer, as an officer of the territorial woman suffrage association, as a teacher, and as the mother of six children. Her name was listed among five women in Manti (where she spent her last years) who were praised for making “education and promotion of equal suffrage part of their daily lives” (Cox, “Utah Women” 313). Dalton said it was her prayer that “the time may come speedily when women will know and hold themselves at their true worth; ... when by the extent of their knowledge of life as it is and as it should be ... they shall compel men to come up to their standard of morality and with them seek something still better. ...” (“Autobiography” 11). This was the goal Lu Dalton spent her life working to achieve.
Chapter 2

"Government, People and Privileges": Essays by L. L. D.

Power is the ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one’s part matter.

—Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Writing a Woman’s Life

. . . It is by exchange of ideas that both [man and woman] may arrive at the whole truth of any matter under consideration, and even for this reason alone it seems that the State needs woman’s opinions.

—L. L. D., “Our Opinion”

The women of Utah first heard from Lu Dalton on November 1, 1872 when her essay “A Plea For the Boys” was published in the five month old Woman’s Exponent. Signing her essays L. L. D., Dalton addresses subjects as varied as the importance of prayer and singing to babies, to temperance, to the injustice women experienced at the hands of the “lords of creation.” While Dalton is listed as a “special correspondent” for the Exponent, she does not fit the modern definition of that term as an objective observer and reporter of newsworthy events (Richards, “Improvements” 68). Instead she is passionate and provocative, working to inspire her readers to take the steps necessary to change existing circumstances. This chapter will discuss the nature and function of Woman’s Exponent and the appeal of the essay in calling for reform. It will then analyze selected essays by Lu Dalton wherein her central theme is clearly present: the right of woman “to stand as man’s acknowledged equal” (“Government” 171).
I

Speaking Freely on Every Topic

The Woman's Exponent was Mormon women's vehicle for defining, defending, and expressing themselves. It was published from 1872 until 1914 under only two editors: Louisa Lula Greene Richards, who headed the paper during its first five years, and Emmeline B. Wells, who assumed the post upon Richards's departure in 1877 and remained there until the journal's demise in 1914. In her first days as editor Lula Greene Richards (1849–1944) promised that the journal would "endeavor, at all times, to speak freely on every topic of current interest, and on every subject as it arises in which the women of Utah, and the great sisterhood the world over, are especially interested" ("Our Position" 4). This eventually included advocating woman suffrage, calling for increased access to education and varieties of employment, and defending the right to practice plural marriage. The Exponent provided Mormon women with a tangible medium through which to form and convey their thoughts, and through it they became a part of the national conversation on the "woman question." They were encouraged to write by second editor Emmeline B. Wells (1828–1921) as a means to organize their thoughts and wrestle with ideas. As Wells put it, a woman may be a "profound thinker," "but if her ideas never assume any form, what will it avail?" ("A Few Ideas" 167). Further, Wells pointed to the advantage of writing over public speaking (which was also encouraged) in reaching a larger audience, stating that a woman "may speak, truly, but few will hear her" (167).

It was that larger audience that Exponent writers sought to address as they wrote not only to their own community but to readers world-wide. Actual subscriptions to the
paper numbered between one and three thousand, but readership was probably higher considering the likelihood that women shared issues within Relief Societies and among sister-wives. The paper traveled outside Utah as well; Lula Richards indicates it went to "some of the most remote quarters of the globe" as it was exchanged with other women's publications ("New Volume" 4). During Emmeline Wells's 37 year editorship there were calls for bound volumes from several turn of the century exhibitions, including the Chicago World's Fair, the Amsterdam international women's conference, and the Paris World Exposition. Additionally, when Mormon women were disenfranchised by the federal government, the Exponent helped them form unexpected alliances with influential women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who, without supporting polygamy, argued their case for suffrage in the national spotlight. Although circulation was relatively small, it is important to understand that Exponent writers intended their message to reach beyond the Great Basin; they believed they had a divine mandate to add their voices to the larger discussion on women and to help correct outside misconceptions of Mormonism.

Response from non-Mormon readers indicates in many cases the paper was indeed effective in dispelling false notions about Utah, Mormonism, and especially about Mormon women. Mrs. Virginia Bamhurst represents the thoughts of many when she tells Exponent readers that most Americans think of Utah as a place having a "government wherein man is the tyrant and woman the submissively tyrannized over—that each man has not merely his own vote, but just as many votes as he owns wives. . . ." But she then goes on to praise and encourage the work of the Exponent in "disproving" these "erroneous" impressions ("Correspondence" 49). Other Gentile readers noticed a
significant disparity when comparing their status with that of Utah women. M. L. Johnston observes, “The women of your community cannot be much oppressed, when they have the right of suffrage, and a paper entirely devoted to their interests. That is more than we can say, for we are not allowed to vote even on questions directly concerning us” (“Correspondence” 46). And at least one outside newspaper, the *Stockton Leader*, acknowledged the positive influence of the paper, declaring, “If the Mormon women read the *Exponent* and live up to its moral and intellectual teachings, they will never discredit the political rights they enjoy” (“Interesting Paragraphs” 119). Further, Lula Greene Richards recounts comments from missionaries that having the *Exponent* in their hands when proselyting “accomplished silent missionary work more potent than they could do preaching long and loud” (“Home Affairs” 5).

If the *Exponent* had some success correcting misconceptions among Gentiles, it was even more effective in fostering a stronger bond among Mormon women. Numerous published letters sing the praises of the paper, recognizing it as a powerful tool for sisterhood. “Mary” writes, “... As I glance over its columns and learn from the pens of my sister writers the thoughts and aspirations that occupy their minds, my heart swells with enthusiasm, and I long to join hands with them and say how fully I appreciate their feelings and ideas” (“Pipsy Papers” 3). “Little One” expresses a similar view: “When I read, I feel a union in spirit with those of my Sisters” (“Woman’s Voice” 11). But perhaps even more telling is the comment from the pen of D. K. wherein she opines the benefit that would result from increased male readership. She writes: “I ofttimes think it would be well if the brethren would read our paper more than they do, and become better acquainted with the sisters’ feelings and desires, and perhaps we could work to one
another’s interest better than we do now” (“Plain Talk” 170). Significantly, church leaders voiced enthusiastic support for the journal and encouraged men to read it. Apostle George A. Smith urged a tabernacle assembly to sustain the *Exponent*, stating, “I am surprised that all the gentlemen in the Territory do not take it. I invite all the elders, bishops, and presiding officers in the stakes of Zion . . . to become subscribers of this little sheet, for I am sure that they will be interested in the instruction and information it contains” (“Interesting Extracts” 11). Clearly, the paper was a valuable forum for dialogue and understanding.

In many ways the *Exponent* functioned for Mormon women like other suffrage papers of the time, but it had the distinct advantage of appealing to an existing audience. In her discussion of the Boston *Woman’s Journal*, Susan Huxman draws on the work of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell to delineate four audience constraints which had to be overcome before nineteenth-century woman’s rights rhetors could fulfill their goals. She lists these constraints as: demographic differences among women, a lack of *publicly* shared experiences, negative self-concepts, and the seeing of oneself as ineffectual (“The *Woman’s Journal*” 98–99). She therefore asserts that the primary rhetorical function of *The Woman’s Journal* was to create an audience through consciousness-raising. By contrast, Mormon women’s rights advocates did not face these barriers to the same degree as their Eastern sisters. These women already felt a commonality stemming from their shared system of beliefs and their experience of religious persecution. Moreover, they participated publicly in their community and in the church, they had a positive sense of self, and they believed they had the power to effect change. While editor Lula Greene Richards did use discretion in choosing which articles to publish, believing she “must
answer to God” and her “own conscience” for her decisions, she issued an open invitation to patrons to “lay before the readers of the EXponent your best devised and most economical schemes for progression in all that pertains to temporal and spiritual salvation” (“Home Affairs” 4-5). The women answered her call with both prose and poetry.

An Ideal Form

The essay in particular was an effective tool for initiating political and social reform. As a genre developed by sixteenth-century, white, educated European men of privilege, the essay was not a vehicle historically available to or chosen by most women. But in the last one hundred and fifty years women have found the essay to be an effective communicative tool. Current scholarship lends insight into the reasons why Lu Dalton might have chosen the essay to articulate her calls for reform. In *The Politics of the Essay*, Joeres and Mittman attest the essay is in many ways the “ideal form for the presentation of feminist ideas” as a “written form that resembles the speech” (a public act) and “invites dialogue and connection, that is straightforward, comprehensible, yet impassioned; that allows and indeed assumes a personal presence” (19). This was important to nineteenth-century women who were negotiating the space between the Victorian notion of public and private, wanting to maintain a degree of propriety while arguing for expanding women’s roles. Joeres and Mittman list the characteristics of the essay as follows: it makes a case for something, presents and interprets evidence, uses experience and logic to argue a point, and has the power or desire to persuade. It does not always follow a tightly structured format but can be “elliptical” and indirect as it works its way around a point (16-17). Finally, Sherry Lee Linkon adds the significant point that
"the essay may well have served as a tool not only for women’s participation in public discourse but also for the legitimation of women’s knowledge and experience as a kind of authority" (In Her Own Voice xviii). This factor would be crucial in an era when most women were behind men in academic education as well as denied formal positions of authority. Thus, the essay is an important genre for nineteenth-century women reformers like Dalton because it bridges the private and public, the personal and political, and it validates personal experience as a source of authority.

II

Lu Dalton uses every available argument in her essays to make clear the need to elevate woman’s status to equal man’s. She does not see an egalitarian position as antithetical to woman’s divine destiny but as a prerequisite; as previously discussed, the prevailing ideology was that Eve’s subjection to Adam applied to all women, but many people in and out of the church also believed that woman could be restored to her position of equality. Although that restoration of status was a complex and multi-layered issue, it came to be symbolized nationally for some women by winning the vote. Sherilyn Cox Bennion explains that as part of a rhetorical strategy to achieve this goal, suffrage newspaper editors “gather[ed] and present[ed] all possible justifications for suffrage, bolstering their contentions and answering their opponents with every idea at their disposal” even when it resulted in inconsistencies (“Woman Suffrage Press” 178). Dalton uses the variety of available arguments in her writings as well; assertions that might seem inconsistent or unrelated come together as part of her exploration of the multiple facets of a complicated issue. Thus, she could expound upon the need for
prayer, the importance of temperance, and the power in motherhood, as well as the right of suffrage and self-determination all as parts of a complex call for broad-based reform. Further, in contrast to the stance taken by antisuffragists that woman had a divinely appointed domestic sphere in which she should remain exclusively, Dalton sees the lines of demarcation between the public and private worlds as permeable and overlapping, allowing, even necessitating, women’s public involvement. And whereas many antisuffragists drew evidence from religion and scripture to argue against women’s involvement in politics, Dalton uses her religion to assert the idea that the people of Utah in particular should be interested in abandoning customs that limited women’s civic participation.

As we sift through Dalton’s essays, several issues surface as significant and central to her overall thesis that women and men must work as partners on equal footing in order to progress in interpersonal relationships and in civilization as a whole, both in this world and the next. Dalton interweaves themes such as the need for temperance, the control of appetites, and the differentiation between love and lust to convey the principle of self-control. She touts the power in women’s traditional roles of wife, mother, and teacher by pointing to the importance of good parenting and setting a moral example. She then presses further to claim woman’s right to education, property, suffrage, custody of her children, and control of her earnings. She argues for equal recreational and educational opportunities for girls and for expanded work options with fair wages for women. She regards women as moral agents with the right of self-sovereignty, and she encourages both their public participation and political activism. Her philosophy of change that “persuasion is more powerful than coercion” becomes clear as she articulately
reasons with her reader taking her point through to its logical conclusion ("Love Thy Neighbor" 101). The careful tone of many of Dalton’s essays reflects her view that “the person who uses mild, temperate language, is far more readily believed than one who raves” ("Moral Temperance" 150). But that philosophy does not prevent her from writing fervently and ironically to expose inequities and to appeal to her reader’s sense of fairness.

“Where Social Reform Must Originate”

Because Victorian notions of femininity allowed woman a measure of authority primarily in her role as mother, and because the family is central to Mormonism, it is not surprising that Dalton’s early essays assert the importance of the home as a locus of reform. As a twenty-five-year-old mother herself, Dalton argues that adult example is a critical tool for change, and she particularly cites parental hypocrisy as a power which undermines moral instruction. Given Dalton’s belief that boys received preferential treatment, it is interesting that her first published essay is “A Plea for the Boys” (1872). In this biting column she traces the source of boys’ “wild” behavior, “bad language,” and “bad habits” back to the father’s example in the home (86). Specifically, she cites a father’s preaching the importance of the Word of Wisdom12 and then contentedly puffing on his cigar or drinking intoxicants as the hypocrisy which will lead children to “draw sharp comparisons between precept and practice” and to make poor choices in life (86). Many women of the time were encouraging men to become more involved parents, but they were undoubtedly frustrated when the example of husbands undercut their effectiveness as moral guardians. Dalton is also concerned about the traditionally

\[12\] The Mormon dietary restriction against tobacco, coffee, tea, alcoholic drinks, and harmful drugs as described in section 89 of The Doctrine and Covenants.
authoritarian parenting style exhibited by many, stating, “Parents, I fear we are too jealous of our authority and exercise too much control over our boys.” She wonders if a more moderate, somewhat egalitarian approach would be more effective, asking, “Would it not be better to lay by some of this authority and show a little more of the friend and companion?” (86). She suggests it is better to live consistently with what we preach and to show children the appeal of choosing the right way rather than compelling them to obey.

That Dalton would have begun her essay writing by addressing the importance of temperance and the example of the father is understandable when we consider the effect her husband Charles’s years of drinking must have had on her family. Alcoholism was a large problem in the nineteenth century, and it became a political issue as women organized to combat it. Nancy Woloch explains that the saloon was “an enemy of women and an insult to the sanctity of the home” because the men who frequented it “might spend all their wages, lose their jobs, abuse their wives, victimize their children, or desert their families entirely” (Women and the American Experience 293). While there is no evidence that Charles’s problem reached this magnitude, it surely impacted his family negatively, if for no other reason than it went against church teachings which discouraged the use of liquor. The issue of abstaining from alcohol was an important one during Dalton’s lifetime as the church began to focus more intently on observing the guidelines of the Word of Wisdom, which was not strictly enforced in its early days. For Charles it was a weakness that began before his marriage to Lucinda, one he could not overcome despite his promises to her that he would quit. Although Dalton resigned herself to the fact that her husband would always be a drinker, it is clear from her frequent discussions
of the topic that she was strongly against it and that she wanted to help others avoid similar pitfalls.

In Dalton’s essays it is often apparent that “little things exemplify great ones” so that the inability to temper one’s drinking represents the larger problem of self-control (“Exercise for Girls” 131). She makes this correlation in “Where Social Reform Must Originate.” Again, she rebukes fathers who “live above the law, and piously bewail the depravity of the world” while “seeking only [their] own sensual gratification” (91). While Dalton specifically mentions imbibing alcohol as the offensive practice, she uses language which implies the need to temper all appetites. She asks readers, “Do you ever repent in secret anguish that you did not exercise your divine right of sovereignty over your own inferior passions and lead instead of follow them . . . ?” (91).

A third essay makes clear Dalton’s broader definition of temperance as “moral temperance,” and it is here that she makes an important distinction between love and passion. She alerts readers, “Love, that heavenly radiance which . . . purifies and sanctifies hearts which nothing else could reclaim, is a name sorely misapplied. . . .” Many, by giving unrestrained liberty to all the emotions which it awakens in their peculiar natures, and pursuing the object with headlong speed, miss it altogether and grasp, instead—passion; that adder to sting the heart that warms it” (“Moral Temperance” 151). Dalton cautions readers to temper their emotions to avoid “recklessness, ruin, [and] torment” (151). Polygamy is a factor here as the sharing of one’s husband undoubtedly provoked complicated emotions and required a certain level of emotional detachment from the women. Men too would need to be on guard as the idea of courting another woman while married could open the door to temptation. Since polygamy was a spiritual
principle only the noblest of motivations would have been appropriate; most participants claimed it actually required a higher level of morality to live the principle properly.

“A Vigilant Watcher”

In April of 1874, Dalton turns her attention outward to the inequitable treatment of females by custom and by law in a polemical two-part essay entitled “Government, People and Privileges.” It is a list of grievances that could be described as a “Declaration of Sentiments” of sorts. Here she uses familiar slavery rhetoric to illuminate the injustices present in American society by correlating white women’s experiences with that of black slaves. She proclaims, “Let each individual find his proper station in life by his innate tendencies and powers; not by any accident of birth or station. Keep not millions of Africans in bondage because they are not white, nor millions of sisters in equal subserviency because they are not brothers.” She continues:

The nation has scarcely ceased panting from the exertion of freeing its black children from their shackles, when lo! its daughters hold up their manacled hands and plead to have their fetters, also, broken. The sons cry out in direst amazement, “These are not fetters, but the costly bracelets which we gave them to make them more beautiful in our eyes! They in bondage! They are our idols, gems who rule over us by the power of their beauty, their grace and all their little clinging, caressing, timid ways!”

(167)

She sees the Victorian construction of womanhood as a form of bondage, and she identifies man’s complicity in it. She reveals the hypocrisy of turning a woman into a
beautiful but weak person for one’s own pleasure and then asserting that because she is inept, she is incapable of accepting the responsibilities of citizenship.

This disparity begins early on and requires careful education, a process Dalton demonstrates in a comparison of boys’ and girls’ experience. While a boy is “dressed in a way that does not impede his movements,” a girl “must be dressed so that she will look pretty, whether she is comfortable or not.” Where he is “allowed to live much in the open air, run, shout, whistle, stand on head or heels” thus building “that vigor of body and mind” which later becomes “the grounds of his self-asserted SUPERIORITY,” she “must live mostly indoors for fear of embrowning that fair face which is her strongest claim to future sovereignty (?)” [sic]. Indeed, girls “must not take boisterous exercise nor make a loud noise, because these are not lady-like” (“Government,” pt. 1, 167). Dalton claims the little exercise a girl gets comes from doing chores for her brother as well as herself. To add further injury, she is not as educated in academics but instead receives lessons on social graces and “sweet dependence” (168). Dalton laments that when a girl finally has the opportunity to climb “the stair of intellectual cultivation,” she is expected “to abandon it forever, to don those jeweled handcuffs, bracelets, those shining badges of slavery, ... and report herself in the matrimonial MARKET” (168). This Dalton says women do “thanks to their careful education” wherein they are taught “numberless tricks and arts” which they use “to attract attention” and, ultimately, a husband (168).

Once married, Dalton points out, the common law takes away any individual rights a woman may have had. The Utah territorial legislature had rejected the common law—which outlawed bigamy—in 1854 as one of many steps taken to accommodate polygamy and grant inheritance rights to plural wives and their children. The legislature
also passed a Married Person’s Property Act in 1872 and at the same time eliminated dower, thereby protecting the property of all women upon marriage. But most of the country still held to many of the precepts which virtually erased a woman’s legal existence during marriage and gave all rights to her husband. By 1865 twenty-nine states had passed some type of married women’s property law which gave married women the right to retain control of their real and personal property and earnings, but the effectiveness of these statutes was often mitigated or nullified entirely by conservative judges who hearkened back to common law practice. Here Dalton is addressing primarily national but to some degree local problems since federal legislators threatened to return Utah to common law as part of their antipolygamy strategy.

Dalton’s essay clearly demonstrates her understanding of the ramifications of these laws of coverture. She first laments a woman’s loss of her name upon marriage, but, she concedes, “Rather than have confusion in children’s names, I am disposed to consent to that sacrifice, even though, because of it, her father gave her less of his property than he did her brothers” (168). She then observes, “The portion she did inherit, by virtue of her marriage became her husband’s, and he is now sole master of it—not joint owner, but SOLE owner. . . . He is owner of all during his life, and at his death, he may give, by will, to others two thirds of all his possessions, leaving her only one third. . . . And if she die first she may not even bequeath her one third”—except in a few states which allowed her to if she obtained her “husband’s written consent” (168). But having no rights to property is just the beginning of Dalton’s indictment. She points out in plain language how laws further penalize married women by listing the rights she

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13 See Carol Cornwall Madsen, “At Their Peril”: Utah Law and the Case of Plural Wives, 1850–1900” in A World We Thought We Knew: Readings in Utah History, 68–84.
would enjoy if she had an unmarried—and therefore immoral—sexual relationship with a man. She explains, “Could a woman consent to sacrifice her conscience . . . she might enter into private contract with any man, and so long as she did not bear his name nor claim marriage, she might live with him, rear children, possess her own property, buy and sell, give legal deeds, make a legal will, and more than all, possess her own children” (“Government” pt. 2, 171). She reasons that it is unfair to strip women of these rights when they choose marriage, an institution which stabilizes society and undergirds its moral foundation.

Dalton then boldly, albeit euphemistically, addresses women’s lack of self-sovereignty in marriage. In careful language she writes, “Then again, her body . . . which she inherited at her birth by the divine right of her humanity, is no longer hers. She may not use it as she pleases, but as he pleases; and rebellion against his supreme will in this matter is so severely condemned by law, that many divorces have been granted on this complaint alone” (“Government” pt. 1, 168). She underscores her meaning by speaking directly to female readers: “Think of it, dear sisters, your persons are not yours but your husband’s; . . . they own both themselves and you” (168).

Dalton’s call for women’s self-sovereignty harmonized with the arguments of many national women’s rights advocates such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but there were few women who were willing to address such a sensitive issue in a public forum. For Stanton, though, the idea was central to her philosophy that women should control their own destiny, and she often took the opportunity to broach the subject when she lectured all-female audiences. According to Nancy Woloch, “Stanton urged her listeners to demand self-control from men and to engage in sexual relations not at men’s insistence
but only of their own volition, possibly only for purposes of conception" (*Women and the American Experience* 326). Dalton’s core belief on this subject may actually correspond more closely with Stanton’s than with other Mormons’ whose similar philosophy of self-restraint stemmed from a general defensiveness over polygamy rather than an assertion of women’s prerogatives. Klaus Hansen explains that because Gentiles viewed polygamy as a convenient means to gratify male sexuality, Mormons strongly insisted that the primary purpose of any marriage was “to have offspring” (“Changing Perspectives” 33). Thus, among Mormons, sexual relations during pregnancy and lactation were prohibited and were theoretically engaged in at other times only for procreation. That said, it is also important to note that not everyone was capable of such self-denial; there were instances of persons being charged with criminal intimacy, even in polygamous communities where they could have been married.

By restricting sex to procreation women could gain some measure of control over childbearing. Dalton weighs in on this issue as she advocates allowing wives to choose the timing of at least their first pregnancy. In “The First-born” (1874) she asserts that the infant mortality rate could be lowered if women had realistic expectations of marriage and were mentally and emotionally ready to become mothers. Her position reflects the notion that the mother’s temperament during pregnancy could impact her unborn child for good or ill. She is concerned that “the timid, ignorant young bride,” who has not yet grown accustomed to being a wife, often “finds herself, and in all probability unwillingly, approaching the throne of motherhood” (63, emphasis added). She elaborates, “However welcome that throne and crown might be a few years or even a few months hence, she now shrinks back affrighted, knowing that she is not yet able to bear calmly the many
small, contemptible, and yet to her, in her transition state, galling, rankling attendant annoyances” (63, emphasis added).

These “annoyances” come both from outside the home and from within. Dalton cites gossip from neighbors who count the months between marriage and childbirth as one detrimental factor which can harm mother and baby. Having her honor thus questioned, the young bride is more susceptible to “overwrought anxiety” which may “injure the constitution of her helpless and passive charge” (63). She also indicates that a woman’s expectations of marriage may come from idyllic “pictures drawn from the pages of romance and fiction” so that when her imperfect husband is less attentive and yielding than during courtship, she may become depressed and self-doubting (63). Dalton’s advice is practical: Teach young people “the actual, everyday, homely realities and duties of life,” keep third parties from “meddling” in the affairs of newlyweds, and most important, “let the wife be her own judge concerning her own fitness and readiness to undertake the duties of motherhood” (63). In taking this position Dalton is not advocating ending a pregnancy, as she makes abundantly clear elsewhere by proclaiming: “. . . But above all things, never, NEVER think of freeing yourself from the incumbrance of an expected child; for if you succeed your hands are stained with innocent blood” (“And Murders Increase” 184). Rather, her underlying concern is helping emotionally mature women have healthy infants that survive childhood. At the time she wrote this essay Dalton was still in mourning over the loss of her own first-born, a son who died on his second birthday a few years earlier. Nevertheless, her public declaration that women should have a measure of control over sex and reproduction is surprisingly progressive and connects her to national figures such as Stanton.
A Common Thesis

Dalton made a point of keeping current on all matters that pertained to women, particularly in the political arena, and she specifically cites articles from *The Woman’s Journal* as well as the writings of Stanton and popular columnist Fanny Fern. She believes it is important for a woman to be a “vigilant watcher of national and local policy” so that she can “form intelligent opinions” (“Our Opinion” 138). Toward that end she read *The Woman’s Journal*, the pro-suffrage newspaper published in Boston by Lucy Stone, and she responds directly to specific articles and essays printed there. She says within its pages she finds “good and wise friends” who, in woman’s behalf, “tear off disguises and reveal the real state of things” (“Correspondence” 122). She applauds the *Journal*’s condemnation of “fashion-worship, mammon-worship and—man-worship” (“Woman Suffrage” 86). She extols the paper’s balanced approach to issues and its advocacy of “perfect equality and not tyranny from either man or woman” (86). Dalton joins in the paper’s national dialogues such as the one sparked by Francis Parkman’s two-part article against woman suffrage. Parkman’s plea for “deliverance from Woman Suffrage” provoked a flurry of rebuttals from suffragists like Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, and Stanton (“Woman Question” 339). Dalton’s retort cuts through Parkman’s rhetoric to reveal his core issue: “The man who opposes the equal rights of women cannot deny nor conceal, when defining his position, that his great dread is to lose the dear privilege of dictating to some woman and pocketing her money” (“Correspondence” 122).

In this same column Dalton reveals her affinity for Elizabeth Cady Stanton, counting her among “the wisest and best of women” (“Correspondence” 122). Lauding her “mild and forcible manner,” Dalton quotes Stanton’s observation on Parkman which
reveals that the real obstacles for women often come from the political actions of the men closest to them: "Chance insults from the lower orders are light indeed compared with those which are coined into laws and constitutions by our husbands, fathers, brothers, sons" (122). Dalton concurs with Stanton’s position that because “legal and social injustice” has been imposed upon woman by man under “the pretense of protecting her,” “self-protection is the best” (122). Dalton may have become familiar with Stanton’s views through her published addresses in Woman’s Journal and the Exponent. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had visited Salt Lake City in 1871 to address gatherings of newly enfranchised Utah women, but Dalton does not say if she attended the meeting and it seems unlikely that she could have easily made such an arduous journey north.

It does seem surprising, though, that a Mormon plural wife would espouse many of the same beliefs as Stanton, especially considering that Stanton was deemed radical for her time. Jill Mulvay Derr raises the point that although Mormon women and feminists might have been moving in similar directions, “their points of departure were diametrically opposite”—at least in the early years of the suffrage movement (“Eliza R. Snow” 81). In her analysis of Eliza R. Snow’s position on the “Woman Question,” Derr argues that Snow “seemed to advocate every tenet radical feminists were working to uproot” as she conceded woman’s degradation and man’s superiority as “unalterably determined” (81). Derr reports that Snow distrusted “that class known as ‘strong-minded’” who flatter themselves that they may elevate woman-kind “with ingress to the ballot box and access to financial offices” (qtd. in “Eliza R. Snow” 77). Writing a generation later, Dalton’s views converge more with Stanton’s on this point than Snow’s as she believes in women’s ability to rise to a level of respect and authority equal to
men's in part through reforming political and social practices. Further, she believes that women's nobility and purity exceed men's and declares, "Not for all their boasted supremacy, superiority, and extensive advantages would I have women come down to their low moral level" ("Autobiography" 9). She admits she has come to this realization after gaining some perspective. Quoting another of her favorites, Fanny Fern, Dalton writes, "... In my youth and blissful ignorance I longed to be a boy; but, like Fanny Fern 'I am now thankful that I belong to a more respectable class of society'"
("Autobiography" 8).

Dalton shares a further commonality with Fanny Fern in the belief that the subjection of women by men starts an injurious chain of consequences that affects everyone, while the elevation of women is crucial to achieving the potential of both sexes. Dalton astutely observes, "Every act of injustice to a fellow-creature recoils upon the perpetrator, warping or dwarfing his or her nature, and blinding the spiritual eyes. For these reasons man cannot hope to ascend the kingly throne of excellence while his inseparable companion remains outside the gate in bonds" ("Our Opinion" 138). This parallels Fern's thoughts: "How strange it all seems to me, the more I ponder it, that men can't, or don't, or won't see that woman's enlightenment is man's millennium" ("Lady Lecturers," Ruth Hall 370).

In one instance Dalton departs from her usual incisiveness and writes a fiery Fanny Fern-esque exposé on what appears to be an incident from her own marriage. She mimics not only Fern's deliberately gossipy style but also her method of appealing to the common experience of women. Stating she has "the deliberate intention of showing my claws this morning," she recounts a stinging tale of a husband's insensitivity to his young
wife ("The Way They Do" 46). The incident is told in second person so that the reader is immediately put in the wife's place. Dalton describes the life of most rural women:

"Your husband is absent on business much of the time, and you have to be both master and mistress about home; cut your own wood, water your own garden and do your own marketing—when you have anything to market with" (46). It is July and the whole town is planning to spend a day in the hills to escape the heat. But "you have not the heart to attend this time because Charles is still absent" (she uses her husband's name) and "the dear fellow might feel a little sad to think you could really enjoy such an excursion without him" (46). When Charles returns unexpectedly, the conscientious wife hurries to attend to his needs, waiting until the next day to tell him about the riding party. Too late to "rig up a team," he offers to go to town for "some nice groceries" for a "little home holiday and a cozy dinner together" instead. "The darling fellow!" (46).

"Presently he returns laden with parcels, and... he tells you hurriedly that 'Brown and them' encountered him over in town, and nothing would do but that he must go out with them and see what the pic-nic-ers were doing." He sees his wife's countenance fall and asks, "Would you like to go too?" Relieved when she answers no and "with the air of one who has done his whole duty" he replies, "'I didn't think you would since there are to be only men in the carriage, and I am only an invited party; but you and Aunty can make yourselves comfortable here and have your little dinner together the same as if I was with you'" (46). Charles departs and the devoted wife throws herself on the bed and has a good cry because "the slight and loneliness you would not risk putting upon him, he would lay on upon you ten times magnified" (46). But that is not the end of the story. Dalton continues, "Then you rise, ... bathe your eyes... and sit
down to tell the *EXPONENT* all about it; hoping in your secret soul that ‘he’ will read it and be very indignant, thus proving that his conscience pricks him” (46). The column ends with the self-consolation that “scores of wives” will read the story and identify with the author’s plight, exclaiming, “isn’t that the truth? Just the way they do!” (46).

If this is indeed an autobiographical episode, then it reflects a significant connection that Dalton feels with readers as she turns to the *Exponent* sisterhood to salve her wounded feelings. There is an additional entry from Dalton in this same August 1873 issue, a personal letter explaining why she has not contributed for a few weeks. Editor Lula Richards had noted her absence in the July 15 edition, regretting “the omission of those ever welcome and highly entertaining and suggestive communications with which we have been so greatly favored” (“Home Affairs” 29).14 Dalton reports that she has been busy nursing her husband’s ailing wife Elizabeth, staying at her home to do the cooking, cleaning, and sewing for her family. She admits, “I am as proud of it as I could be of a flaming article which would fix the eyes of thousands” (“Woman’s Voice” 47). It seems unlikely, working under such time constraints, that Dalton would have made the effort to write such a scathing account of husbandly insensitivity if it were simply for entertainment. Rather, it is a specific effort to vent frustration and pain, a pointed attempt to make her voice heard by the man who has caused it, and an appeal to other women for consolation.

“*The State Needs Woman’s Opinions*”

Dalton reaches out to her sisters to encourage them as well. She believes that to “arrive at the whole truth of any matter under consideration” there must be an equitable

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14 To clarify: here “suggestive” means “to offer a suggestion” rather than “having sexual connotations.”
“exchange of ideas” between women and men (“Our Opinion” 138). Toward that end she prompts tentative women to bolster their courage and begin expressing their opinions publicly. This can be seen in a letter she addresses to “My Dear Sisters” (“Letter to the Relief Society” 3). The choice of a letter at once allows her a more personal and intimate voice. Her advice is sisterly and heartening as she begins by affirming women and praising their contributions in their homes and communities, declaring, “Holy is the work to which you are called, . . . and blessed be she . . . who withholds not the little she can do, because she cannot do great things” (3). She then coaxes the women to practice speaking in front of groups—in this instance, in the safety of Relief Society meetings. Assuring them they each have something to contribute, she entreats,

Be not afraid of the sound of your own voices; if your diffidence drive ideas from your mind the first time you rise, promise yourself you will have your nerves and thoughts under better control another time, and do not put that other time off too long. If you think others are older and wiser than you, so be it; but the one truth you may be able to express is just as true as any one of the ten another may set forth, and should not be concealed because it is but one. (3)

She further admonishes them to be educated, suggesting that in their sewing circles one be appointed to read instructive books to the group while the others work. She reminds them that as women they have the power to instill their “hopes and aspirations” in the next generation, “so any measure, moral, religious, political, social or domestic which is universally desired by mothers, their children in after years will surely accomplish in spite of opposition” (3).
Education is absolutely imperative in Dalton’s view, for without it woman cannot progress. She declares, “In the natural order of things a person must be prepared for responsible positions before occupying them” (“Woman Suffrage” 86). She makes a clear distinction between social and academic education, asserting that women who are educated to be socially defined ladies are actually enslaved. She opines, “So long as idleness and helplessness are the standards by which to measure a woman’s ladyhood, just so long she will be a slave to ladyism” (“Woman Suffrage” 86). Dalton compares those who restrict female education to the “the slave owners of the South” who “thought it necessary to the security of their property that their slaves be kept in ignorance” (“Government” pt. 2, 171). She praises the Mormon philosophy that “woman should be as highly educated as man,” and she looks to Relief Society meetings as “excellent schools” where women can improve themselves (“A Talk” 191).

In “A Talk With the Sisters” Dalton asserts it is a Mormon woman’s responsibility to be educated in order to fulfill her potential and that women should become more efficient in their domestic work to allow time for self-culture. Here she addresses “those who deem they can ALWAYS spend their time better at home,” stressing to them that in addition to extending charity, “it is the duty” of each Relief Society member “to improve herself” (191). Succinctly she tells them, “Although woman’s first, and most likely her last, duty is at her fireside, she has intermediate ones elsewhere” (191). She recommends attending “lectures, concerts, libraries, art galleries” and counsels the sisters not to worry about being “sneered at as ‘strong-minded’” or being called “blue-stockings” for doing so (191). She declares, “My firm belief is that the mother who keeps home more strictly than necessary, thus leading too narrow a life, is
farther from her duty than she who studies to save labor that she may have time to mingle with her kind, to inform her mind and refresh her body” (191). She underscores her message by submitting the idea that “God is testing us in small matters preparatory to calling us to labor in great ones” so that we must “take every opportunity to educate ourselves” and “be prepared to occupy any position . . . to which we may be called” (191). By calling education a religious duty, Dalton gives women a new impetus to take time from household work to improve themselves. Often it was less a matter of desire than logistics that prevented women from becoming more educated. By encouraging women to be more efficient and by suggesting Relief Society meeting as a site of both temporal and spiritual instruction, Dalton offers practical solutions to the problem of time constraints. Her argument also has the added benefit of being endorsed by editor Lula Greene Richards, who exhorts her readers to give special attention to the column as “many of you are needing such hints as are therein given, and it contains good food for every intelligent mind” (“Home Affairs” 189).

Women’s education is necessary preparation for giving the state their opinions through the ultimate symbol of women’s civic participation—the elective franchise. For Utah women the franchise was inextricably connected to their religious practice of polygamy, and Woman’s Exponent became the forum for debate. The women of the Great Basin had initially been given the vote by the territorial legislature in 1870 after they mobilized to protest the 1869 Cullom Bill, which would have enforced anti-bigamy laws. Dalton explains that Mormon women were ready to use the franchise wisely in part because of their educational preparation, but she hastens to add, “Their chief preparation for the ballot lies in having so long and so keenly felt the need of a weapon of self-
defense” against the “scorn and contumely of the world at large” (“Woman Suffrage 86). Dalton articulates the feelings of many when she proclaims, “She [the Mormon woman] never asked for the franchise but when it was offered to her she accepted it gratefully, and will now cling to it as her life” (86, emphasis added).

Subsequent threats to take away the franchise were met with indignant responses from Dalton. Such was the case for the 1873 Frelinghuysen Bill which, under the guise of protecting Mormon women, would have abolished polygamy, returned Utah to common law, and permanently stripped the franchise from women—even if the rest of the country should later grant it. Dalton wonders how any “unprejudiced person” could “call it just” that Mormon women be deprived of their franchise “at the whim of interested or disinterested politicians who make not even a pretense of showing a reason for it” (“That Bill” 127). She then delineates what the vote means to her: “I look upon it as the concession of government that daughters are human as well as sons, and as a stepping stone to all other privileges” (127). In the end it was the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act which disfranchised Utah women as one of the federal government’s antipolygamy moves.

When the church finally discontinued polygamy in 1890, after years of persecution by the government, Utah women were again faced with having to win voting rights as part of the territory’s 1895 bid for statehood. With the support of suffrage leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Mormon women publicly worked for their cause, issuing a call to action in the pages of the Exponent. Naturally, Dalton was among them. In one of her most fiery essays she asks readers, “Shall women themselves, under the veil of their traditional modesty, stand silently by in a crisis like the present, and let this great
wrong be done to them and their children, to their country and civilization?” Her answer is emphatic:

Mark this, sister women! To do so would make us accessories before the fact to nothing less than a great crime. You who walked side by side with your pioneer husbands out of civilization into desolation, you who bore more than an even share of hardship and danger in subdueing [sic] this stubborn, unfriendly clime, you who toiled, hoped, prayed but wept not, can never be persuaded, that you and your daughters are not equally concerned in all that pertains to this hard-won home, equal heirs to the grand estate. (“Shall Utah Become a State” 113)

Dalton believed women’s actions over the years had completed “every requisite to honest, useful citizenship” proving they deserved the vote (113). After some debate the men agreed, and Utah was granted statehood with woman suffrage as part of its constitution. But for Dalton the suffrage victory was an outward sign of what she hoped was an inward change in attitudes toward women in nineteenth-century America.

“Unfettered Liberty”

Lu Dalton’s editorials call for the elimination of laws and opinions that limit woman’s choices, asserting that women have the right to self-determination. She says she is glad women do not wish to dictate to men but instead they sensibly argue, “I am not your counterpart, but I am your equal; my mission on earth is as important, as high and holy as yours, and I have equal need of unfettered liberty to choose my own course in life, and pursue the calling for which I am best fitted” (“Our Opinion” 138). She believes it would send a positive message to children if they knew that their mother’s devotion was
"the fruit of her own free will and choice—that she was not driven to rearing men and women by public opinion and laws which debarred her from anything else" (138). She calls for making alternatives available to women, saying that for most of them "maternal and hearthside duties" are dear. "But," she adds, "if one woman is fit and willing to serve the public in any honorable calling, it is an oppressive law which forbids" (138). Further, as a Utah teacher whose earnings averaged 40 percent less than her male counterparts, she advocates fair compensation for woman’s labor, writing, "This working twenty-four hours a day for board and clothes is growing too monotonous, and we feel like it is time to adjudge the rate of wages according to the actual service being performed, instead of according to the sex of the servant" ("Not Dead" 159).15

Dalton’s prose is clear and rational as she voices woman’s cause: "She wants an equal voice in family affairs, and equal ownership in children and purse" ("Not Dead" 158). Dalton attests that laws "can never be quite just until man and woman stand on a true level, having equal rights, equal honor, equal self-sovereignty" ("Woman Suffrage" 86). Her essays illuminate disparities and expose injustices in an effort to make women—and men—aware of the debilitating consequences of such practices and to inspire them to make the changes necessary to reach equality. She reminds her audience that by elevating women, individuals and society as a whole will progress. In summary she avers,

Liberty, knowledge and integrity are three things which are never lessened by being imparted to others; so let woman advance all she can in patriotism, learning, dignity and every good word and work, and it will

15 Joyce Kinkead states, “As late as 1885 the average monthly salary in Utah was $49.10 for men and $29.60 for women” (Schoolmarm xlii–xliii).
detract nothing from men’s abilities, acquirements, or opportunities, but only increase the sum total of the world’s intelligence and worth. ("Our Opinion" 138)
Chapter 3

“Gleams of Light”: Poetry by Lu Dalton

Though clouds may lower and thunders roar
The timid to affright,
Far faith breathes calmly evermore,
“Beyond this all is light.”

—Lu Dalton, “Grim Duty”

Dalton’s poetry continues her polemics, but it shows her private pain and spiritual strength as well. Her subject matter here is as varied as in her prose, and many poems challenge illogical arguments with the same fiery directness. But on occasion her poetry permits her audience to see the complicated woman behind the public persona—a woman who at times feels vulnerability, sadness, and resignation. In her autobiography Dalton discloses, “From my childhood I have done considerable thinking, and long years ago, pondered questions which puzzle me still” (7). Within her poetry Dalton finds a space to grapple with those questions while allowing her reader to see first-hand her search for meaning and understanding. This chapter will discuss Dalton’s poems in the context of her life and her religious beliefs, with a consciousness of her published essays. It will show her effective rhetorical use of identification and her ability to enter into dialogue with her readers through her poems. She addresses different audiences: men she would like to educate, women she wants to uplift, and the Mormon community in general. Dalton’s commitment to raising women’s status remains as firm as her commitment to her faith, and she uses her poetry to do political as well as personal work as she writes about women’s roles, motherhood, relationships, and polygamy.
Lu Dalton’s life has much in common with the lives of other nineteenth-century American woman poets. Cheryl Walker characterizes the woman poet from this era as “well educated and spiritually keen,” showing “unusual intellectual promise before she was out of her teens.” She was either single or frustrated in marriage and “suffered intensely and relatively early from the deaths of loved ones.” She “turned to writing to ease financial burdens or a troubled heart” and often “sought the support of an influential male” (*American Women Poets* xxxii). Using this list as criteria, Dalton’s life experience is quite typical. As were most female writers of her day, Dalton was a precocious child. She recalls, “I loved my books and came to regard the head of the class as my rightful place” (“Autobiography” 4). Because she was bright she explains, “My parents desired to give me especially every opportunity at their command, hoping that afterward I would be able to teach my younger brothers and sisters” (4). The importance of precocity cannot be underestimated in the development of many nineteenth-century women writers. Walker explains, “By seeming precocious, a girl could establish an identity as an exception, worthy to be further educated and encouraged” (*American Women Poets* xxix). Dalton received academic encouragement and support from her parents, who wanted all their children to be educated, as well as from the unnamed male teacher in Utah who recognized her potential and began training her at age twelve to become a teacher herself.

Dalton was also a deeply spiritual woman who drew immense strength from her religion and her faith in God. She says her religion “upheld” her “in many a bitter trial” and “comforted” her “in grief when nothing else could” (“Autobiography” 13). She was prayerful from an early age, and her autobiography records times when those prayers were
answered as well as spiritual experiences which reveal her gifts of intuition and prophecy. One occasion which demonstrates the power of her faith happened when she was only sixteen. Her baby brother was extremely ill and the family feared he would die. She writes that she believed “in all humility” that since she “had lived near to the Lord” and “tried to do his will,” she was “entitled to claim the promise ‘Whatsoever ye ask in my name in faith that shall ye receive’” (14). She fasted and prayed “with intense fervor” that her brother’s life would be spared; the baby lingered for several days, neither getting better nor worse. One day she overheard her anguished mother cry aloud, “‘Why, oh, why! must my innocent baby suffer so much; if it is God’s will to take him away, oh, let his cruel sufferings end!’” (14–15). Lucinda ran out and fell to her knees, sobbing, “‘Thy will, Oh Lord, not mine, be done!’” (15). When she returned to the room she saw a change in the little one’s face, and later that evening he died. The experience taught Dalton two things about herself. She learned that frail humans must submit to a loving Father’s will that does not always correspond with their own. And, in retrospect, she realized that because she had expected to have a “sudden and entire change of heart” as part of her spiritual journey, she had failed to recognize that the “spirit of the grace of God” had always been in her life; she had “sought mourning” for something that was already hers (14). As she explains, “Where can be the need of a ‘change of heart’ if one’s heart is already at the feet of Christ?” (14).

Walker’s observation that the typical female writer was either single or frustrated in marriage and turned to writing for emotional healing is also true for Lu Dalton. She had been determined to remain a single woman and became a plural wife on October 3, 1868 to Charles Dalton only after experiencing a spiritual witness that she describes as
“a direct incontrovertible testimony . . . that it was the will of God . . . that I should accept
this man for my yokefellow” (“Autobiography” 20). Charles, according to Lavina
Fielding Anderson, was “without doubt the man who was most significant both for good
and for ill” in Lucinda’s life (“Lucinda” 143). Dalton credits him for curing her
misanthropy, yet married life with him was both economically and emotionally
challenging. Charles was joint owner of a store in Beaver, Utah as well as a teamster who
hauled freight to surrounding areas. However, these two enterprises barely brought in
enough money to support himself, five wives, and more than twenty living children.
Charles’s long absences, financial difficulties, and drinking as well as the normal
challenges of marriage complicated by polygamy took a toll on his wives. A family
account relates that his first wife Julietta16 could no longer stand the “continual strife and
bickering” and left her husband in 1870, although Lavina Anderson states that Julietta
was the only wife who remained sealed17 to Charles even after his death (“Story of a
Pioneer Family”). Family histories also note that second wife Elizabeth and third wife
Sarah Jane separated from Charles at this time as well, but genealogical records suggest
that their separations were not permanent at this time since these wives bore him children
after 1870. It is understandably clear, though, that there were times of trial and
contention in the various Dalton households.

As a couple Charles and Lucinda were not exempt from the struggle required to
make a plural marriage into the celestial marriage that it was supposed to be, and neither

16 Also spelled Juliette in some genealogical sources. Lavina Anderson’s biographical article calls
her Juliaetta, but this seems to be the name of her eldest daughter.

17 Marriages performed in the temple which unite a man and woman not only for this life but also
for eternity are called “sealings.”
were Lu’s parents. Their lives and marital troubles intersected when Lu’s father John P. Lee married Margaret Pope as a plural wife on August 22, 1868. If family records are correct, this was just a few days after he had returned from a church mission to the southern states. This marriage alienated his first wife Eliza, who had given birth to their thirteenth child in his absence and had made cloth and leather gloves to help support the family in the wake of financial setbacks. Tensions which eventually led to John and Eliza’s separation increased over the next two years, causing Dalton’s younger sister Emma to quit her parents’ home and move in with Charles and Lucinda.

Soon thereafter a conflict arose between Charles and his father-in-law. Lavina Fielding Anderson recounts a Beaver ward clerk’s minutes from April 1871 which state that “the ward teachers”18 were “sent to make peace” between Charles and John P. but were unsuccessful (“Lucinda” 148). Anderson suggests the quarrel may have been over the engagement of the forty-five-year-old Charles and seventeen-year-old Emma, which possibly happened without the father’s consent. After their October 9 wedding Emma apparently continued to live in Lucinda’s home. Plural wives living in one household was a rather common arrangement in polygamy, particularly when the wives were sisters. Dalton does not record her feelings about her sister’s marriage to her husband, but her affection for Emma remained constant, and her love for and loyalty to Charles was steadfast even in trying times—which must have come for Charles and Emma since their marriage ended in divorce less than four years later. Dalton would request a sealing cancellation (in effect, a divorce) herself thirteen months after Charles’s death in 1883,

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18 Pairs of men assigned to routinely visit and carry a gospel message to specific families within a congregation or “ward.”
although she professes her love for him even then. Overall, this was an extremely difficult period for Dalton who gave birth to a daughter and lost her beloved two-year-old son Charles only a few months before Charles and Emma’s wedding. It was also during these years that she began writing for Exponent, which began publication June 1, 1872. The timing may have been significant since these were also the years that she and her sister were married to the same man, but it may also have been a fortunate coincidence that she had a forum in which she could publicly express her political views, her frustrations, and her insights.

II

What is Woman’s Sphere?

Dalton’s December 1873 poem “Woman’s Sphere” is a good example of her poetic reform efforts directed toward men. Here she asserts the power of the pen in woman’s “stainless” hands to help others “back again / To heaven’s bright, celestial lands” (106). She is again adamant that woman must have more knowledge and opportunities in order to fulfill her divine mission on earth, a mission Dalton sees as encompassing the political and academic worlds as well as the domestic. Rhetorically she asks, “Tell me what is woman’s sphere? / What path was she designed to tread?” (106). Only a few months earlier she had made it clear in an essay that she had “no use” for “spheres” if they required her to “swallow” the “nauseous doses” of “unsupported” opinion advanced as fact by arrogant men who expected women to “accept

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19 Lavina Anderson states that this cancellation was rescinded fifteen years after Lucinda’s death by church president Heber J. Grant; this action would leave her sealed to Charles again (“Lucinda L. Dalton” 164).
unquestioningly” the “most absurd dogma” on any topic without a shred of convincing evidence (“Assertion is Not Proof” 54). It is to these men that she directs this poem, presenting a three-fold argument: first, women’s contributions must be acknowledged and respected; second, women need intellectual and cultural development to fulfill their role as mothers and for their own personal growth; and third, woman’s advancement is not a threat but is essential to the common good.

She begins by asking if women must forfeit their womanly strengths in order for their contributions to be validated as equally important and vital as men’s. She wonders, “Must she, TO PROVE SHE HAS A SOUL, / Fling gentle attributes away?” (“Woman’s Sphere” 106). The prospect of women taking on masculine characteristics along with public roles was a concern often voiced in the nineteenth century by both women and men. Here she is suggesting that not only will women not become “mannish,” they will bring a healing, uplifting influence to the world beyond their front door: “Is woman’s mission strife or peace? / Her fittest task to wound or heal? / To rivet fetters or release / Woc’s weary victims and increase / Man’s power to fight and conquer ill?” (106). Women’s ability to strengthen and ennoble others is a quality which Dalton insists must be respected. She implores, “Since on the souls of men her seal / In fadeless characters is set, / Oh let her know, behold and feel / The glorious crown of mortal weal / Her God, upon her brow has set” (106).

She next wonders if woman is forbidden from turning “her longing eye / On anything beneath the sky / Beyond her small domestic lore?” (106). Home life is important to Dalton, but as she asserts in her essays, women need to grow intellectually as well:
Is she but fit to sweep and sew,
To spread her master's table well,
To go and come, to come and go,
On one unvaried round, and grow
In nothing good if nothing ill?

Has she no mind to cultivate?
No heart for fatherland to glow?
No int'rest in the future fate
Of sons and daughters, that her state
Is almost slavery, vile and low? (106)

With a life weighed down by "petty cares" woman is unable to cultivate her intellect and enlarge her soul. Her mind then becomes "a desert" from "long suppression," making her less capable of attending to God's "dearest and most sacred care" of rearing his children (106).

Dalton employs two further strategies to convince her reader of the veracity of her position. She uses what Kenneth Burke calls "identification," inviting men to put themselves in women's place. She recalls to men the benefits they receive from intellectual growth with the hope they will recognize their sisters have a similar need. She reminds them, "When your mind's culture is complete, / Your nature polished and refined, / For mate in life 'tis surely meet / You have a soul not simply sweet, / But strong
and noble, heart and mind” (106). She then uses the “republican motherhood” philosophy that educated women are better wives and mothers who will rear correspondingly intelligent and virtuous citizens: “Her wisdom makes her son more wise, / Her courage makes her daughter brave” (106). She points out to men that woman’s cultivation and development is “thrice well” for them as it benefits women, children, and men. She writes, “No shadow, charming toy or slave / Can ever be companion true; / To fit her for her duties grave, / More light and room must woman have— / To walk side by side with you” (106). Woman needs more education and more of life’s experiences to be an equal partner to man, to be a proficient mother, and to be a responsible member of society. Her argument ends with a call to look to the past for the evidence which supports her claims: “For turn to history’s page and see / The hero’s mother; it was she / Who made him worthy of our pride” (106).

Dalton’s rhetorical strategies as she speaks to men also include the use of humor and irony; this is most apparent in “Answer to What Are We Men to Do?” (1876). Here she offers a rebuttal to a selected poem appearing in Exponent written by R. W. Easterbrooks, a male poet who wonders what will be left for men to do when women assume the occupations that have traditionally been theirs. He says some suggest that roles could be exchanged, but he uses the worn argument that this would be impossible since “God has fixed it so we can’t” because “babies must be borne and nursed / by female mothers” (“What Are We Men to Do?” 172). Dalton’s response is characteristically direct and drenched with irony:

20 “Republican motherhood” is a term coined by historian Linda Kerber. Although this ideal still restricted women from public life, it increased the social significance of motherhood as it gave women more influence in the home.
It seems, gentle sir, you are somewhat afraid,
Your strong-minded sisters may step from their sphere
And some of your precious MEN’S RIGHTS may invade?
(Excuse me a moment to wipe off this tear!)
You fear their activity given full sway
Would really monopolize industries all?
You flatter them, sir, in so happy a way,
I bow you my thanks in behalf of them all. ("Answer" 17)

Easterbrooks elicits no sympathy from Dalton, who mocks his claim and exposes its implications. Dalton first challenges his offer to trade places, calling him "exceptional" if he is actually willing to take on the responsibilities of twenty-four hour child care. She also makes it clear that Easterbrooks has entirely oversimplified the problem: "You speak of the babes with the satisfied air / Of one who has cited the catalogue through" (17). She counters that if motherhood were only a matter of caring for children, there would be enough time left "for study" so that women could lift themselves "in intellect ALMOST to you" (17). Again she notes that the exhausting and time-consuming work women do is undervalued by men: "’Tis thus that our labors have always been scorned! / The ‘little’ admitted which gives them their breath. / Men smile at the burdens so patiently borne, / Though we know their weight often crushes to death" (17). Dalton was acutely aware of the demands of domestic work. Working nearly her entire life as a teacher in addition to her role as mother, she at one point employed her sister-wife Sarah Jane to help with the housework. The arrangement was beneficial to
both women since the income from Lucinda meant Sarah Jane could afford to pay tuition for her own children’s education.

Dalton’s poem further argues that women are no longer willing to accept the limitations placed on them by cultural and legal constraints, limits which men have been anxious to keep in place:

Scant praise and less pay have resolved us at last
To try some employments man claims for his own;
We like them; they pay us; the time being past
To tremble at shadows, the barriers thrown
Around us by man we will scale or pull down,
Denying his right to prescribe every “sphere,”

To say, after fixing our limits all round,
“My sphere is unbounded, but yours is just here.” (17)

Dalton claims here, as she does in her essays, that women have the right to decide for themselves the parameters of their sphere. Because their domestic work is undervalued and because they find economic and emotional satisfaction from the few occupations open to them, women are now asserting the right to determine their life’s course.

Consequently, this raises the issue of fair compensation for labor: women not only receive “scant praise,” they also collect “less pay.” Dalton experienced first-hand the repercussions of working to achieve wage parity. In an 1891 letter to her cousins Lois and John Bushman, Dalton explains that a recent move to Payson, Utah is the result of her having “too much to say” on the subject of fair pay for female teachers.
I always took the liberty to assert that it was a disgrace to the town to hire girls who had education enough, ability enough, and character enough, to be trusted with our little children, for three dollars a week. The girls learned my tune and sung it to the Board until they were forced to raise their wages to the extravagant sum of $4.50 a week! Holding me to blame for this squandering of the public funds, the Board resolved to take it out of my salary this year. But when I refused to rebate a hundred dollars of my wages, they hired another man, paid him as much or more, and left me to learn wisdom by the things I suffered. But Providence was on my side; I know, because Payson sent for me unasked, and I am all right yet. (2–3)

Ever ready to “put in her oar” for woman’s cause, it is characteristic of Dalton to work bravely toward changing inequitable practices not only broadly in print but specifically within her own circumstances. Her belief that God was watching over her in her crusade simply strengthened her resolve to take action.

Dalton’s poem to Easterbrooks goes on to state that despite laws which give sole parental rights to the father, mothers are happy to lovingly care for their children and gladly claim the responsibility. But, she explains, many women want increased opportunities in the public world of employment as well. She ironically suggests to Easterbrooks that he just sit back and relax while industrious women do their work, an option which implies that Easterbrooks—and other men—are merely lazy. Her message is that in a world where there is much work to be done, surely men can find some productive industry to occupy their time just as women do—something other than working to keep women down.
"Mother-life"

Dalton is one of many nineteenth-century female writers who illuminate the importance of women's contributions in part by portraying motherhood and domesticity in their writings. To educate men such as Easterbrooks, who apparently have no concept of what domestic work entails, Dalton employs an effective strategy used by many feminists—making women's work visible. She does this in "A Day of Mother-life" (1880). In this poem she recounts a normal day in the life of a frontier mother. It includes the usual daily routine as well as accidents, interruptions, and even danger. This mother hurries from first light until long after the children are in bed, and yet she acknowledges her "busy hands and feet / Would need be faster though they flew" (89). After everyone is fed breakfast and dressed, the adventures begin. Baby climbs "forbidden stairs" then "bumps his precious nose." Brother injures his toe and mother must bandage it, while spilled yeast halts her bread-making project. Her midday meal preparation is further interrupted by a fire in the woodpile, and after returning from helping to put it out, she sees baby has enjoyed his time alone at the table mixing "sugar, meat and sauce" and tossing glasses on the floor (89). All this leaves no bread or meat ready for dinner, so naturally this is the day husband brings an unexpected guest.

It is no wonder at this point the busy mother sighs, "I dread to-morrow's treadmill round. . . . Why must I delve so near the ground? I long to soar on fairy wings" (89). She then stops a moment to reflect, "I almost thought my lot was hard / Because the things I'd like to do / Are out of reach" (89). Although the "outline" of her "favorite schemes" is "obscured by clouds of household care," she realizes that her service to her children brings great rewards (89). She knows, as does Dalton, the harsh reality is that
her "darlings" may not survive to adulthood, and she vows, "If they remain I'll never frown" (89). She may be tied to their needs at this point in life, but it is no sacrifice if they "are happy, hale and sweet" (89). She resolves, "Leave wider fields for those whose homes / Are not with household jewels set; / While I before the Heavenly Throne / Give thanks that mine are spared me yet" (89). This poem which reflects Dalton’s gratitude for her own surviving children may seem to contradict her earlier calls for increased opportunities for outside work and public involvement, but they actually dovetail. As many of her contemporaries noted, active involvement in politics and public life does not preclude involvement in the home. Further, women in the nineteenth century were practical enough to recognize that not all adult women would have a male to provide for them, nor would all wives have a husband who could provide adequately. Thus, women needed equitable self-supporting wages in a variety of occupations as well as control over those wages for married women.

Dalton also addresses specific legal issues which stem from women’s role as mothers. As she discusses in her essays, one of her issues is women’s prerogative to decide the timing of first pregnancies to increase their baby’s chances of survival. This concern grows out of her own loss. Several of Dalton’s poems reveal the painful imprint left particularly by the death of her small son Charles in 1871 but also from the death of her infant daughter Rosette, who lived only a few months in 1874. Most of these poems are efforts at self-consolation, attempts to see her children’s deaths through an eternal perspective that could reconcile her heartbreaking loss with the knowledge that her children are now safely in their Heavenly Father’s care.
Dalton strives to articulate her ambivalent feelings in “Through Darkness, Light” (1879). Her depiction of her emotional state at the time rings true: “A dread, chill gloom broods o’er my spirit, / A sense of loss and emptiness— / Not agony, but something near it— / A joy in sorrow’s sable dress” (49). As she reflects on the image of “baby eyes” “so violet dark, so melting blue” in what she thinks must have been a dream, she vividly describes her pain: “The fount of tears is dry and burning, / My heart almost too numb to ache—” (49). The dream she has dreamed “does not seem a dream of sorrow, / But rather joy I may not know—”; these are hopes unfulfilled, moments of happiness unknown (49). The pain of losing her baby, whom she calls “a gift too rare for earth to hold,” comes through in her plaintive cry, “Oh, tender Christ, give back my child!” (49). The poem then turns, ending with gratitude that God “lent” her his child “one brief summer” because “it made you mine forever— / How great reward for little grief” (49). She finds solace in knowing that eternal ties promise a reunion in the next life. Dalton uses no pronouns here that might indicate specifically who this poem is about, although most of her mourning poems are clearly about little Charles. But because of the reference to “one brief summer,” this poem seems to be about Rosette. The date of her birth is unclear (Anderson states she was probably born in 1874), but the May 1874 publication of a poem in which Dalton describes holding her new daughter and remembering her little Charles would suggest that Rosette may have been born in the spring of that year and lived just through the summer.21 The omission of identifying pronouns, though, makes this poem more appealing to other mothers reading it, all those pioneer women who had felt the same loss and might be looking for the solace of a comforting connection.

The second legal issue stemming from motherhood that Dalton raises is the guardianship of children. Her reply to Easterbrooks makes plain the inconsistency of asserting that children are women’s responsibility because they give birth to them (“But since ‘God has fixed’ that the children are ours”), then denying them any custodial rights (“Though man claims them his—yes and his all alone”). She broaches the subject again in “Questionings” (1878), conceding to her baby daughter, “And even you they’d tell me, are not mine” (161). Dalton argues it makes no sense that a mother, who nourishes a new life with her own and brings it into the world after “months of pain and suffering,” should not have a legal right to the child she bore (“Government” 168). She is dismayed that despite what she calls an “admitted fact” that “a father can scarcely even understand . . . the utter devotion of a mother’s love,” the law “gives the child to the father alone” as an extension of his “ownership of the mother” (171). Moreover, if a couple separates, the child goes with the father unless “he can be proved a lunatic, a dangerous drunkard or a felon” (171). A father may even execute a will which leaves custody of his children to someone other than their mother in the event of his death; this he can do without his wife’s knowledge.

This is appalling to Dalton, a woman whose solicitation for advice from church leaders on canceling her sealing following her husband’s death was largely motivated by her desire to remain her children’s mother in the hereafter. Local brethren were concerned for her eternal standing after Charles died because they, for unspecified reasons, deemed him an “unworthy” husband. They urged Dalton for her own sake and the sake of her children to request a sealing cancellation and remarry. But Dalton would never consent if severing eternal ties to Charles meant she would sever ties to her children
in the next life as well—that would be too high a price to pay. She confesses to a church leader, "My feelings as a mother are far keener and deeper than my feelings as a wife. I am the mother of six children; four are still living, and two gone before; and I would not forfeit my claim to them as their mother, for the sake of the best man in God’s kingdom" (Letter to D. H. Cannon, 24 Aug. 1884, 2). Knowing that at least two of her children would achieve the highest glory in the next life because they had died before the age of accountability,22 Dalton would take no action that might jeopardize her privilege of being their mother.

"Woman’s Sky is Clearing"

When Dalton speaks to her sisters in her early poetry, her tenor is upbeat and hopeful: optimism replaces angst, celebration supplants polemics. In "Woman Arise" (1874) she exults that woman’s long night of oppression is coming to an end, and she attributes this dawning of a new era to the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ on the earth. It is the light of truth which is brightening women’s path, “so long dark,” and is giving them strength to “wrestle with wrong / Which, crushing thee, crushes all human” (10). She reassures them, “Thy desolate cry through ages gone by / To the ear of thy God has ascended” (10). God has heard their prayers for deliverance from “grim-visaged wrong,” and as she has told them before, they must now prepare to take on greater responsibility “For soon shall thy penance be ended” (10).

22 Mormon doctrine teaches that children who die before the age of accountability at age eight will be "saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" because they are without sin (Doctrine and Covenants 137: 10).
Her poetic portrayal of women's lives up to this point is realistic, but she is also confident that the barriers they have faced will, as she says, be scaled or pulled down by the united efforts of enlightened people. Acknowledging their trials, she writes,

"By ignorance bound, by custom enwound
In meshes not easily broken,
With talents suppressed where brightest and best,
Thy intellect seldom has spoken. (10)"

Women have been limited in the past, but she believes this will change now that Christ's church has been restored to the earth with all its teachings which elevate women's status. With eager anticipation Dalton proclaims, "Full soon shalt thou stand co-equal with man" (10). Again she cautions women that equality does not mean they should forfeit their "sweet," "holy and tender" attributes, but she maintains confidence in her assertion that this era of revealed truth means the end of women's oppression:

"Undoubtedly hear this anthem of cheer,
The voice of a prophet is singing;
Oh sister rejoice! lift up thy glad voice!
The bells of thy freedom are ringing! (10)"

"Woman Arise!" appears in print again in 1893 in a shortened version.\(^{23}\) It is nearly two decades later and only two years prior to Utah's 1895 bid for statehood with woman suffrage reinstated as part of its constitution. The poem is signed L. L. Dalton as were her later contributions, so it is likely that she resubmitted the revised version herself to the March 1 Exponent. From there it was probably selected for the August edition of

\(^{23}\) *Woman's Exponent* 21 (1 Mar. 1893): 131.
the Beaver Woman Suffrage Association’s handwritten paper, the “Equal Rights Banner.”

The revisions include a few incidental word changes as well as the omission of stanzas four, six, eight, and nine. Significantly, these are the stanzas which contain Dalton’s list of women’s past difficulties, her cautionary statements, and her rallying cry of coequality. She may have made the changes simply for aesthetic reasons, to refine the poem and remove redundancies. Possibly she felt that many of these hurdles had indeed been overcome, thus rendering the stanzas somewhat obsolete. If this was her thinking, it would have been heartening indeed for a woman who had worked so tirelessly for women’s progress.

III

“Our Much Abused Institution”

In this final section of poetry Dalton turns from the issues which affect all women to issues which particularly impact Mormon women and, even more specifically, Dalton herself. As conflict over polygamy between Mormons and the federal government escalated in the 1880s, Dalton was one of many plural wives who defended the principle in *Exponent*. Responding to increasingly coercive legal actions against her church, her strategy shifts from polemics to presenting evidence of the positive results of plural marriage and showing the consequences of government persecution of families who simply want to follow their religious beliefs.

“A Little Girl’s View of the Mormon Question” (1885) juxtaposes the outside world and Utah in order to demonstrate the advancement and morality of Mormon communities. Here a “daughter of Utah” recounts the harsh conditions her forbears faced
as they worked to turn the Great Basin from arid land into a place of bounty. Crickets, starvation, and poverty are now replaced by shady trees, filled granaries, and healthy crops. Modern technology has brought the telegraph and the railroad, and churches and schools are now plentiful. This young girl is educated, and as she reads about the outside world she notices that it does not compare well to life in Utah.

An important measure of the moral caliber of a society is how it cares for children, and the little girl sees that outside of Utah the children are being mistreated. She reports, “I read of poor children who live in the street, / Except what they beg for they’ve nothing to eat, / No parents or friends to surround them with care, / And only the raggedest clothing to wear” (49). Children are being abandoned by their parents who presumably can not support them; they are left to fend for themselves or are sent to houses “built for the poor.” The young narrator further exclaims it “can never be right” for people “to leave a poor baby, all alone in the night” on somebody’s doorstep (49). Naively she wishes they could all come to Utah, “For I know in a week each would find a good home” (49). The speaker’s youth prevents her from understanding that these babies are usually the illegitimate offspring of adulterous men, but it is clear that Dalton is making a pointed accusation at the lack of morality among the Gentiles. A major argument against polygamy, especially among female antipolygamy activists, was that it fostered licentious behavior among men. But Dalton and others countered that, in actuality, polygamy provided an honorable and accountable alternative for men’s sexuality while giving more women the opportunity to become wives and mothers. She does not understand why some people would tolerate “sexual depravity” such as prostitution because a man pays for services rendered but “condemn as ‘filthy’ . . . an
avowed marriage for time and all eternity, responsible and proud fatherhood and perfect chastity abroad” (“Reply to Emily Scott” 152). As she explains to Gentile reader Emily Scott, “Polygamy as we view it, is not for the giddy, the selfish, and the wicked, but only for the noble, the wise, the pure and the far-seeing” (152).

Dalton contends that women who are plural wives are as noble and pure as their monogamous counterparts, and their marriages are as important as well. She demonstrates this by depicting a wife whose husband has been torn from the family by federal raids of Mormon communities in “Sundered” (1888). She begins the poem by quoting from the Christian marriage service, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (57). This reminder of wedding vows taken immediately suggests a common bond between Mormon and non-Mormon, while pointing out that in the name of Christian virtue Mormon marriages are being destroyed by federal intervention. This rhetorical effort to gain the sympathy of her audience is further developed in the body of the poem.

Dalton portrays the thoughts of a wife who has been separated from her husband by the threat of federal authorities. She laments, “The joy his coming brought is o’er; / Those dear eyes light my home no more” (57). These are emotions with which readers who love their spouse can identify. The wife declares she would “fly to him” but “reasons stern” prevent her (57). Arrest attempts necessitated secrecy among plural wives. As raids increased, wives and their children lived apart from their husband and were forced to deny any connection; many went into hiding. The wife confides, “My paling lips that fain would press / Upon his brow a pure caress, / May only breathe his name so low / That none but God can hear or know” (57). If she should happen to see her
husband in public, she can scarcely acknowledge him. Eyes that would lovingly “scan his face” are “now forbidden to behold” him, “Save with a glance estranged and cold” (57).

Portraying the reality of family separation was a device used in the past by women who banded together against slavery. Much as Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* worked to humanize black slaves for a white audience and to show the tragic effects of slavery, Dalton uses this poem to put a face on polygamy. She shows the country the impact of the heavy-handed actions of the government on lives of ordinary women. Polygamy then is not an abstract evil to be fought but is part of a religion practiced by faithful people. That Dalton was such a staunch defender of the principle when her own marriage was less than what she hoped is evidence of her commitment and faith.

**“Questionings” and Answers**

Two of Dalton’s poems stand out from her body of work for their painfully honest search for meaning amidst dashed hopes and affirmation amidst disheartenment. The first poem is entitled “Indian Summer” (1875). Cheryl Walker observes that Indian Summer was a favorite topic for nineteenth-century women poets, and she suggests its “juxtaposition of different seasonal moods” may have symbolized the ambivalence they felt about many things in their lives (*American Women Poets* xxv). But this poem set in Indian summer moves beyond ambivalence to convey a profound sense of disillusionment, disappointment, perhaps even betrayal.

The poem begins with a meditation on nature’s beauty but soon becomes a mournful cry. The speaker is relishing the end of a “golden” day in a “halcyon season” of harvest. She has spent her day in “idle dreaming,” leaving her “daily duties” to listen to the sound of faint bells on distant herds and to ponder the soft whisperings of seasons
changing. Anticipating the coming winter causes a change in her mood, bringing out “other deeper tones which strike the hidden strings / Whence over my soul’s saddest music rung” ("Indian Summer" 81). She "torture[s]" her "dull senses to disclose / The meaning of vague hints of pain and fear" that come "unbidden to the feast" of her repose (81). She no longer trusts this peaceful moment, calling it "False as the hollow truce when ruthless foes / Pause but to strike a surer, deadlier blow" (81). Her disillusionment comes tumbling out as she demands,

Why must the sweetest dream but wake to fears?
   The fairest season usher storm and cold?
   The brightest hopes but end in grief and tears?
   The loveliest bud a cankerworm unfold?—
   My heart grows faint, my eyes are dim with tears—
   My youth like some sad ghost before me stands—
   For all the glorious hopes of those bright years
   She grasps but straws in eager, empty hands.

Life seems untrue to every promise given,
   And mocks each lofty aim with cruel scorn!
   Oh tell me! is there even truth in Heaven?
   And why, oh, why! were poor frail mortals born? (81)

While the poem's speaker does not reveal the source of her pain, thus preventing the scholar from guessing Dalton’s secret sorrow, its omission gives the poem a more universal application and allows the reader to step into her shoes, to commiserate and to
empathize. Who in times of deepest turmoil has not questioned the meaning of life as Dalton does here? Perhaps for Dalton this crisis of faith was brought on by the devastating loss of her children. Or, as the poem’s November 1875 publication date suggests, it may have been related to her sister Emma’s failed marriage.

It was only weeks before this poem appeared that Emma petitioned Brigham Young for a divorce from Charles, obliquely citing “reasons, which Pres. Murdock has kindly informed me, you do not require me to state” (qtd. in Anderson 148–49). Utah’s liberal divorce laws allowed women to apply for divorce without giving formal grounds, so the fact that Emma does not reveal her reasons is not in itself unusual. But the September 12 request becomes more significant when a few months later Emma leaves the church and Beaver, calling Mormonism “iniquity” and “its followers hypocrites” (qtd. in Anderson 149). Dalton’s relationship with Charles remains intact at this point, and she maintains her love and support. But her use of language such as “distrust” and “false” in combination with “brightest hopes” which “end in grief and tears” hints at broken promises.

Despite this crisis of faith Dalton’s poem concludes with a feeling of renewal and resolve, a sense that she must commit to God those things over which she has no control and continue to believe that there is a divine plan. She repents her doubts and reaffirms her commitment to trust in the Lord:

> And Thou, whose just will hid from mortal sight
> I dared to weakly question even now,
> Forgive! and lead my faltering steps aright;
> And, like Thy mountains, may I never bow
'Neath cloud or storm, but, steadfast and serene
Through good and ill, still patiently await
Whatever in Thy wisdom Thou dost deem
Is for Thy loving child a fitting fate. (81)

The second poem is one of Dalton’s most honest and poignant, and its publication leads to a crucial revelation. In “Questionings” (1878) Dalton attempts to work through the inconsistencies she encounters within Mormon culture. Because of her religion’s paradoxical teachings of equality and hierarchy, and because of the ways in which fallible humans manifest these teachings in their actions, she struggles to gain confirmation of what she believes in her heart to be true but does not always see evidence of—that God loves his daughters as much as he loves his sons and that women can have an unmediated personal relationship with him.

In this very personal poem an intimate moment between a mother (Lucinda?) and her newborn daughter is shared. As the baby “nestles” near her heart, the mother tells her that she longs to “shield” her from “woman’s destiny” of “deep humiliations, longings vain, / And blind outreachings for the light above” (161). She explains that as women they are “bidden to the last and lowest seats” at The Master’s table and receive “but fragments of the royal feast” (161). While men may follow Christ, they say women must follow them:

Our brother creatures in their haughty strength
Claim all the higher places for their own,
And say the gentle Master them has sent
To bid us come no nearer to His throne.
They say that from their hands we must receive
The bread of life which they may ask of Him—
Though they may follow Him to love and serve,
We must but love and serve and follow them. (161)

For a woman of great spirituality such as Dalton, the thought that she could not approach divinity in service and devotion without a male intercessor would have been heartbreaking. It is clear she is specifically talking about members of her religion because the next lines describe that which awaits the faithful (male) followers of Christ in distinctly Mormon terms: "He rewards His own with wondrous powers, / With honors, kingdoms, crowns and lives divine" (161). The final two lines of this stanza suggest that women come to these rewards only as hangers-on and, as noted before, that they have no direct claim to their children: "We may have naught; our very lives be theirs, / And even you they'd tell me, are not mine" (161).

Dalton explained this tragic misconception of post-mortal existence when two years earlier she wrote some of her reasons for disdaining marriage. She records in her autobiography, "I had been told in express terms by some blind leaders of the blind; that the Kingdom, here and hereafter, belonged only to man; and that woman enjoyed its gifts and blessings only in sufficient degree to make her man's efficient servant; and that looked to me not worth striving for" (17). Once she discerned the falseness of this statement, she recognized that marriage had the potential to become the equal partnership she hoped for.
The poem continues with the mother pleading with her baby daughter, who has “so lately seen His face,” for confirmation of woman’s unmediated relationship with Christ:

May we no longer touch His garment’s hem
Without a brother’s hand outstretched between?
Will His life-giving voice but quicken them
And leave us sleeping till THEY break our dream?
Is servitude our everlasting doom?
E’en high as man’s hopes may we not aspire?
Because we here sit in the lowest room
Will Christ ne’er call us “Daughter, come up higher?” (161)

In the peaceful look on her baby’s face she finds “assurance” that Christ, who himself gave “the Magdelen” “His precious word,” will “end the cankering doubts in perfect bliss” (161). Dalton was willing to ask difficult questions as she worked through the inconsistencies around her, some of which undoubtedly came from misconceptions and ideas brought from former religions. Through the process, though, she remained hopeful. Most important, she remained faithful to her religion and her God.

In writing this poem Dalton allows readers, both female and male, to see and consider the pain that results from broadly-brushed pronouncements of superiority made by “haughty” men. “Questionings” is not argumentative as are some of her poems, yet it presents evidence from her personal experience. In effect, Dalton’s poem invites readers to identify with the speaker, helping them to see a reality they may never have considered—particularly if they are male. This “identification” can be especially
effective rhetorically and, as Burke asserts, it can lead to a dialectic in which one voice acts upon another in cooperative competition resulting in “views transcending the limitations of each” (“Rhetoric” 203). Dalton’s “Questionings” prompted a swift answer the following month from another Exponent contributor, and the two women engaged in the very type of dialectic Burke describes.

Esther Ann Birch Bennion, who wrote poetry for Exponent under the pseudonym “Query” (also spelled “Queery” elsewhere), responded immediately to Dalton’s lament. She acknowledges that it is “well known” that “man has carped, and warped a woman’s sphere, / To suit his selfish needs,” but she argues the “fault” is partly woman’s because she renders service to others so liberally and freely that “Man thinks her lack of agency is proved” (“To Lu Dalton” 177). She cautions Dalton, “O breathe no thought of doubt in thy babe’s ears / Nor tell her thy chafed heart’s bewildering fears” for “Too soon hard lessons she will have to learn” (177). Instead, she advises her to teach her daughter to trust in God and his plan for women and men in mortality. Further, she pointedly suggests that if a husband is following the teachings of Christ, a woman should want no more than to trust in his righteous leadership. She ends with the affirmation that ultimately there will be no need to assert “Our Rights” because in God’s realm all will have “Perfect Liberty” (177).

Dalton’s reply to “Query” appearing in the next issue is significant. She states that she is not alone in her questionings, and she assures “Query” that her concerns do not stem from her own difficulty in marriage to an authoritarian husband. She writes, “. . . ’Tis not my own and single woe, / From all my precious sisterhood apart, / That stirs

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24 Thanks to Bruce Jorgensen for his assistance in making the connection between “Query” and Bennion.
such depth of feeling in my breast / And wrings such bitter tear-drops from my heart”
(“To Query” 185). There are others who share her concerns, and she is speaking for them as well. But Dalton defends her husband Charles as a man worthy of respect, who does not “fling” a “scornful word” to “wound a sister soul” nor assert regal authority over his wife (185). Instead, he “deems the marriage vow a pledge divine / Of mutual bonds, and equal joys and powers,” including the acknowledgment of joint guardianship of children (185). Whatever his shortcomings may have been, Charles had an egalitarian view of marriage. Dalton then makes the important assertion that equality between husband and wife exemplifies the celestial relationship of a divine Father and Mother to which Mormons aspire:

Does man so far excel that he dare boast

“I am your head,” and still say God is just?

Nay, call this truth, upon a single throne

The King and Queen together reign as one. (185)

On a rhetorical level this exchange is significant because the cooperative competition within these women’s dialogue results in an understanding that approaches a truth both poets can embrace. By considering the implications of each other’s statements and responding accordingly, they work toward the nucleus of their faith—that Mormons believe divinity consists of an exalted couple who act in perfect harmony and full equality. If, then, righteous women and men are working toward this model, they must begin here in mortality. This is the conclusion Dalton herself calls “truth.”

Every issue that Lu Dalton is working for—equal rights, equal custody of children, self-sovereignty, opportunities for work, agency to choose, civic participation
and suffrage—all these stem from her belief in the divine equality between men and women. For Dalton, all temporal issues she addresses are representative of and are a measure of the world’s progress toward this goal. In these lines from “Woman” (1893) she refers to Eve’s consequences when she writes that women are “First to fall under the censure of God, / Last to receive a full pardon” (107). But she also clings to this idea: “That daughter and son God will equally own / When made pure and redeemed from the fall” (“Addendum” 138). She believes that at some point in time, when all things are restored to their proper order, women will realize their true potential and receive their reward. She writes, “So, a day cometh, a glorious day, / Early perfection restoring . . . / Then woman, who loves e’en through sorrow and shame, / The crown of a queen will be wearing” (“Woman” 107). Dalton understood her religion to be a part of that restoration of order, but she wanted it to occur in this life, not just in the hereafter.
Conclusion

Lu Dalton’s poems and essays stand as a record of the inequities nineteenth-century women faced and their heroic efforts to maintain a sense of grace even as they worked to change their circumstances. Her carefully reasoned arguments effectively expose the flaws in existing laws and customs. She understands that not all disparities women experience are inflicted out of malice or ill-intent but are often the product of social and political systems in need of reform. She succinctly explains, “... Men in general do oppress women in general even if unintentionally, because the frame work of laws and the network of customs under which they live will have it so” (“Woman Suffrage” 86).

Dalton is compelled to help correct those discrepancies by enlightening men and uplifting women. Her efforts to bring about necessary changes through her writing require her to use a variety of rhetorical strategies: reason, persuasion, humor, irony, and identification. She makes women’s work visible and argues its worth. She educates her reader by thoroughly examining the consequences of specific laws such as the common law and antipolygamy legislation. She demonstrates the inconsistency of putting women in a domestic sphere and then keeping the custody of her primary responsibility—children—in men’s hands. She recognizes that many problems of her time grow out of interpretations of the story of the Garden of Eden and Mother Eve’s role there and that it will take time to overcome the hierarchical ordering of men and women that many insisted was a consequence of the Fall. But Dalton believes that she can expedite that day if she can only help people recognize women’s true worth and potential.
Dalton further realizes that women must actively take part in their own emancipation instead of sitting on the sidelines and waiting for those in power to recognize women’s plight. She sees the necessity of calling women into dialogue over issues which impact their lives, and toward that end she encourages them to become thoroughly educated on all subjects and to speak out boldly. Dalton sets the example herself through the pages of *Exponent* as she responds to issues, to other writers, and to politicians. She allows her own pain to be seen publicly to reveal the results of insensitivity on both the personal and institutional level. And, through a dialogical process she works with at least one reader toward revelations of truth.

Dalton’s faith and perseverance shine through her poems and essays. Although her own marriage was a disappointment, she clings to the idea that women and men can work together to make marriage an equal partnership in which both husband and wife continue to grow intellectually and spiritually. She knows that with an enlightened husband, a wife can preserve her identity and her self-sovereignty. Dalton’s religion provides her the key to woman’s emancipation: a recognition of her spiritual equality, her intrinsic value, and her moral agency. In practical application it offers her greater involvement and authority in the home, in church, in the workplace, and in politics.

To see Lu Dalton’s political writing against the backdrop of her life and her religion allows the reader to understand her motivations. For this woman religion and politics are intertwined, public and private are circular—each category informing and shaping the other. At the core of her religious belief and her political activism lies a model of divine equality; it is the ideal which urges her onward in her quest for equality in the temporal world. She is fully cognizant of where women have been, where they are,
and where they are headed, and she believes her words can help them achieve their divine potential. She clearly and powerfully synthesizes and articulates her vision in a final poem called simply “Woman.”

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. (107)
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APPENDIX

Selected Poems by Lu Dalton
Woman's Sphere

Tell me what is woman's sphere?
What path was she designed to tread?
What may she hope? What must she fear?
What may she do and what must dare
To win her daily dole of bread?

Must she, TO PROVE SHE HAS A SOUL,
Fling gentle attributes away,
And where black war clouds darkly roll
And death's red banners float, enroll
Her kindred humankind to slay?

Best fitted for the sword or pen
Are women's slender, stainless hands?
The one devours the life of men;
The other helps him back again
To heaven's bright, celestial lands.

Is woman's mission strife or peace?
Her fittest task to wound or heal?
To rivet fetters or release
Woe's weary victims and increase
Man's power to fight and conquer ill?

Or say you, do I look too high
And ope for her too wide a door?
Must she not turn her longing eye
On anything beneath the sky
Beyond her small domestic lore?

Is she but fit to sweep and sew,
To spread her master's table well,
To go and come, to come and go,
On one unvaried round, and grow
In nothing good if nothing ill?

Has she no mind to cultivate?
No heart for fatherland to glow?
No int'rest in the future fate
Of sons and daughters, that her state
Is almost slavery, vile and low?

With heart and hands with petty cares
So overfull, she cannot gain
That culture which alone prepares
To mold Humanity's sweet heirs
Fit to adorn a lofty plane.

Since on the souls of men her seal
In fadeless characters is set,
Oh let her know, behold and feel
The glorious crown of mortal weal
Her God, upon her brow has set.

In woman's hand her God has placed
His dearest and most sacred care;
With lofty aspirations graced,
While attributes and motives chaste
For her high destiny prepare.

As idle tools will surely rust,
Neglected harps lose perfect tone,
So human powers how'er august,
When left without improvement just
Dwindle till usefulness is gone.

As plants untended droop and fade,
And weeds choke out most precious seed,
So woman's mind, a desert made
By long suppression, needs the aid
Of cultivation broad and deep.

Her wisdom makes her son more wise,
Her courage makes her daughter brave,
And is the light of her fond eyes
Whose hope, in their bright future lies
Will loftier thoughts their spirits lave.

Let woman's sphere, then, not be small;
Her powers developed, not confined,
Her intellect, will, body all
Emancipated from the thrall
Which far too long has round them twined.

Whatever well she can perform,
Whatever she aspires to do,
Whate'er expands, protects from harm
Or gives her life an ample form
Is well, O man, thrice well for you.

When your mind's culture is complete,
Your nature polished and refined,
For mate in life 'tis surely meet
You have a soul, not simply sweet,
But strong and noble, heart and mind.

No shadow, charming toy or slave
Can ever be companion true;
To fit her for her duties grave,
More light and room must woman have—
To walk side by side with you.

Your children thus will nobler be,
Their powers thrice be multiplied,
For turn to history's page and see
The hero's mother; it was she
Who made him worthy of our pride.

Answer to What Are We Men to Do,
by R. W. Easterbrooks, Exponent, April 15th, 1876

It seems, gentle sir, you are somewhat afraid,
Your strong-minded sisters may step from their sphere
And some of your precious MEN’S RIGHTS may invade?
(Excuse me a moment to wipe off this tear!) 
You fear their activity given full sway 
Would really monopolize industries all? 
You flatter them, sir, in so happy a way, 
I bow you my thanks in behalf of them all. 

You’d gladly exchange work if only you could; 
(Exceptional man, if you mean what you say! 
I ne’er knew another admit that he would:)
But babies need feminine mothers you say, 
Quite true—bless the babies!—they really do need 
Those same “female mothers,” fond, patient, and true, 
To nourish and cherish, and all their wants heed; 
But, though this is much, is it all that we do? 

You speak of the babes with the satisfied air 
Of one who has cited the catalogue through; 
But the leisure for study, were they our sole care, 
Might lift us in intellect ALMOST to you. 
’Tis thus that our labors have always been scorned! 
The “little” admitted which gives them their breath. 
Men smile at the burdens so patiently borne, 
Though we know their weight often crushes to death. 

Scant praise and less pay have resolved us at last 
To try some employments man claims for his own; 
We like them; they pay us; the time being past 
To tremble at shadows, the barriers thrown 
Around us by man we will scale or pull down, 
Denying his right to prescribe every “sphere,” 
To say, after fixing our limits all round, 
“My sphere is unbounded, but yours is just here.” 

But since “God has fixed” that the children are ours, 
(Though man claims them his—yes and his all alone.) 
We gladly and proudly will pluck the sweet flowers 
Transplanted to earth from the foot of His throne. 
And if you scorn the needle, the washboard and broom, 
As much as is probable—being a man— 
If ‘mong the world’s workers you cannot find room, 
I then would suggest—not advise, mind—this plan: 

You shall sit in the shade—I will plant you a tree— 
Fold your hands, shut your eyes, hang your feet on a chair. 
And, lighting the soothing and odorous weed, 
Puff blue, balmy clouds on the plain, common air; 
And while those poor “females” who would have their way, 
In pursuit of their work hurry breathlessly past, 
Half open your eyes and with gentleness say— 
“Thank heaven I’ve found out my true sphere at last.”

Woman’s Exponent 5 (1 Jul. 1876): 17.
Woman Arise!

Oh woman, arise! this glow in the skies
Betokens the advent of morning;
Thy spirit should smile, exulting the while
In the day which has published its warning.

Its glory shall shine in splendor divine
Thy path, so long dark, to illumine,
And render thee strong to wrestle with wrong
Which, crushing thee, crushes all human.

Thy desolate cry through ages gone by
To the ear of thy God has ascended;
He bids thee prepare thy armor to bear
For soon shall thy penance be ended.

Thy folly lay by, bid vanity fly,
And trifling and cowardice follow;
On purposes high, with calmly fixed eye,
Disdain pleasures blandishments hollow.

In God be thy trust, His fiat is just;
He hears all thy passionate pleading;
Still cling to his hand, He'll teach thee to stand
Upholding, chastising and leading.

By ignorance bound by custom enwound
In meshes not easily broken,
With talents suppressed where brightest and best,
Thy intellect seldom has spoken.

Thy heart true and warm, in every form
Have pain and pale sorrow attended;
And grim-visaged wrong has trampled thee long,
But soon shall its triumph be ended.

Full soon shalt thou stand co-equal with man,
Untrammeled, yet faithful and lowly,
Triumphantly meek, resistless though weak,
A conqueror, guileless and holy.

When no more a slave be noble and brave
But keep thy heart holy and tender;
All attributes sweet be wary to keep
Nor yield them to grandeur and splendor.

Thy champions, though few, are valiant and true
And swiftly their numbers are swelling;
Then never despair for lo! in the air
Pure light is the darkness dispelling.

Undoubtedly hear this anthem of cheer,
The voice of a prophet is singing;
Oh sister rejoice! lift up thy glad voice!
The bells of thy freedom are ringing!

Woman's Exponent 3 (15 June 1874): 10.
Indian Summer

Fair Indian Summer, mellow, calm and sweet,
   Another of thy golden days is done;
In mystic silence glide thy viewless feet
   While sinks again to rest thy gorgeous sun.
The herds' faint lowing from the meadow dells
   Floats like an echo on the dreamy air.
The mellow tinkle of their distant bells
   Suggests faint music from Cathedrals fair.

The husbandman rejoices in the store
   Which he from bounteous Mother Earth hath won,
And smiling Plenty blesses o'er and o'er
   The sturdy toiler whom she calls her son.
My days drift by in idle dreaming spent,
   Unheeding daily duties left undone;
This halcyon season seems a riddle sent
   Which I all vainly waste my moments on.

The soft air whispers strange mysterious things
   Of Summer gone and Winter yet to come,
And other deeper tones which strike the strings
   Whence over my soul's saddest music rung.
I torture my dull senses to disclose
   The meaning of vague hints of pain and fear,
Like wild unrest behind this sweet repose,
   Or storm winds closing in the smiling year.

Why must the sweetest dream but wake to fears?
   The fairest season usher storm and cold?
The brightest hopes but end in grief and tears?
   The loveliest bud a cankerworm unfold?
My heart grows faint, my eyes are dim with tears—
   My youth like some sad ghost before me stands—
For all the glorious hopes of those bright years
   She grasps but straws in eager, empty hands.

Life seems untrue to every promise given,
   And mocks each lofty aim with cruel scorn!
Oh tell me! is there even truth in Heaven?
   And why, oh, why! were poor frail mortals born?
My weak and wavering gaze now sadly roves
   To rest upon yon mountain's waving line—
Their calm, majestic grandeur of repose
   Rebuks this childish restlessness of mine.

Their sentry pines each lofty summit crown,
   Their ripening woods and thickets redly gleam,
And from their fruitful chambers trickle down,
   To bless the vale, full many a sparkling stream.
The low, red light gilds every dome and swell,
   In tender shade the bosky hollows rest—
Oh! restful hills! teach me your lesson well—
   In blessing others we are doubly blest.

And Thou, whose just will hid from mortal sight
   I dared to weakly question even now,
Forgive! and lead my faltering steps aright;
   And, like Thy mountains, may I never bow
'Neath cloud or storm, but, steadfast and serene
   Through good and ill, still patiently await
Whatever in Thy wisdom Thou dost deem
   Is for Thy loving child a fitting fate.

Woman's Exponent 4 (1 Nov. 1875): 81.
Questionings

Sweet woman-child, that nestles near my heart,
With downy touch like birdlings in the nest,
What magic came with you to heal the smart
And kindle joy instead within my breast?
Brought low with woman's weakness, here I lie
And gaze upon my treasure bought with pain,
And pity you for woman's destiny,
And long to shield as mothers long in vain.

Life seems so hard to such as we, my love,
An endless round of weakness, toil and pain,
Of deep humiliations, longings vain,
And blind outreaching for the light above.
We love and suffer, daily offer up
Our hopes, our lives, our all that we can give;
Self-sacrifice we drain as nectar cup;
For others only we are taught to live.

We're bidden to the last and lowest seats
The Master's servants at His table spread,
And given but fragments of the royal feast,
While with the rarest viands some are fed.
Our brother creatures in their haughty strength
Claim all the higher places for their own,
And say the gentle Master them has sent
To bid us come no nearer to His throne.

They say that from their hands we must receive
The bread of life which they may ask of Him—
Though they may follow Him to love and serve,
We must but love and serve and follow them.
While He rewards His own with wondrous powers,
With honors, kingdoms, crowns and lives divine,
We may have naught; our very lives be theirs,
And even you they'd tell me, are not mine.

Oh, darling! you have lately seen His face
And in His presence felt no diffidence;
Oh tell! ere you forget or my heart break,
If now you are forever banished thence?
If after we have worn His crown of thorns
And borne, like Him, the cross, with bleeding feet,
To touch our outstretched hands He e'er will scorn,
Or send, not bring, the balm of healing sweet?

May we no longer touch His garment's hem
Without a brother's hand outstretched between?
Will His life-giving voice but quicken them
And leave us sleeping till THEY break our dream?
Is servitude our everlasting doom?
E'en high as man's hopes may we not aspire?
Because we here sit in the lowest room
Will Christ ne'er call us "Daughter, come up higher?"

Your mild, sweet, saintly eyes look into mine,
A slow, rapt smile breaks over your small face,
Your lips keep silence, solemn, sweet, divine,
But in your beatific look I trace
A glad assurance that the lowly Lord
Whose feet the Magdalen might bathe and kiss,
Who gave, not sent, to her His precious word,
Will end the cankering doubts in perfect bliss.

*Woman's Exponent* 6 (1 Apr. 1878): 161.
To Query,
and All My Dear Sisters in Zion

“All the mothers are abroad to-day
Guiding tiny feet along the way,
Crowning tender brows with garlands gay.

“But among the mothers we shall meet,
Pausing oft to favor little feet,
None will be so blest as I, my sweet.

“None among the children is so fair
As my baby with her golden hair
Like the aureoles the angels wear.”

Florence Percy.

Dear friend, come lay your cool hand on my brow,
Come count the measured beatings of my heart
And know ’tis not my own and single woe,
From all my precious sisterhood apart,
That stirs such depth of feeling in my breast
And wrings such bitter tear-drops from my eyes,
For mine the noble mate of soul possessed
Too great, too true to wear such selfish guise.

Not his the tongue a scornful word to fling,
To wound a sister soul and rankle there;
Not his the heart to whisper I am king
And she my subject now and evermore;
Not he says haughtily This child is mine,
But tenderly and proudly It is ours;
And deems the marriage vow a pledge divine
Of mutual bonds, and equal joys and powers.

Frail, woman’s strength and heavy is her load,
But true her heart and full of love and trust;
Does man so far excel that he dare boast
“I am your head,” and still say God is just?
Nay, call this truth, upon a single throne
The King and Queen together reign as one;
No mine, no thine, no first nor last be known,
But we desire our Father’s will be done.

St. George, May 7th, 1878

Woman’s Exponent 6 (15 May 1878): 185.