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Abstract Review of *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (2004), by Dan Vogel.

Dan Vogel's Family Romance and the Book of Mormon as Smith Family Allegory

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The Baganda people of Africa have a folk saying, "A person who never travels always praises his own mother's cooking."[1] Dan Vogel's biography of Joseph Smith represents a particular ideological and historical situation.[2] Vogel could have overcome his parochialism by reading some contemporary historiography to discover how trends in literary criticism, philosophy, and historiography itself are changing how historians approach their work, or he could have read more about how professionally trained readers interpret difficult texts. This biography needs editorial work to reduce its ideological saturation and length. Vogel surveys Joseph Smith's life, but his main thrust and ideological goal is to show parallels between Smith's life and the Book of Mormon text, to show that the Prophet transmuted the material of his own life and psyche into the Book of Mormon by writing a thinly veiled fiction.

1. Cited in Philip Turner, "An Unworkable Theology," *First Things* 154 (June/July 2005): 12.

2. See the review of Vogel's book by Andrew H. Hedges and Dawson W. Hedges, "No, Dan, That's Still Not History," *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 205–22.

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Vogel's Biases

> No positivist criticism can adequately deal with mythology and the supernatural.[3]

Vogel makes a generic acknowledgment that all biographers have biases (p. xii). He makes no attempt to conceal his ideological presuppositions (this is praise for Vogel, by the way);[4] I just wish he were more aware that his biases are not natural—representing just the way the world is, free of ideological intrusion. In other words, Vogel's acknowledgment of biases is too generic to be helpful. It does not divulge the extent to which those biases constitute and enable his historical interpretations. Such biases do not merely need to be noted, as if mentioning them generally negated their influence; our ideologies and prejudices are foundational.

From within political science the interpretivists have challenged the dominant positivist positions, and even the positivists have learned to admit to having biases. If one substitutes the word *historians* for *political scientists* in the following quotation, one will fairly see the limited advance it is to get positivists to admit their biases:

> Generations of inquirers have subsequently learned to pay lip service to the interpretive critique's caveats regarding the inevitability of evaluation. Thus, one often hears from political scientists the doxic repetition that, whatever the field of study, their own "biases" must be recognized and/or acknowledged. But such declarations miss the suggestion that the

3. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination,* trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2.

4. On 15 December 2005, on a thread at the "LDS Dialogue and Discussion" portion of the FAIR Message Boards entitled "Probability and NHM," Vogel confessed: "It all hinges on what I'm trying to establish. I'm not trying to prove JS a false prophet or the BofM not inspired. I'm trying to establish the BofM is not historical, which the Spaulding theorists are already convinced of. Actually, my biography interprets JS's history and the BofM based on the assumption that the BofM is not historical, so I don't spend a great deal of time arguing that point." So much for ideological neutrality, for working without an agenda, and for simply letting the facts speak for themselves. See www.fairboards.org/index.php?showtopic=12015&st=225 (accessed 21 December 2005).

> discovery of one's, let us, following Gadamer, say prejudices in language and practice might be the end of inquiry, or a demanding dimension of the process of inquiry, rather than an easy propaedeutic to it. Indeed, when the discipline missed this suggestion—when it institutionalized the interpretive critique as a caution about particular normative investments and research biases—it performed what we argue has become a routinized practice of fact neutrality.[5]

Rather than solving the bias problem, the mere admission of a prejudice drives the researcher from one form of positivism (the idea of doing research without biases) to another (the movement of facticity from the veridical world to the world of the researcher). Such a critique of positivism in both history and political science notes that the admission of a bias is only the beginning point of exploring how deeply ideological concerns are woven through the fabric of interpretation. Ideology constitutes, creates, and shapes the interpretation, rather than just being an impediment to proper explanation that can be overcome through the admission of prejudice.

Bill Russell, in a similar doxic manner, has asserted of Vogel's biography that "while no historian can be totally objective, Vogel's biases are not as visible as those of Brodie, on the one hand, or, on the other, orthodox biographies by Richard Bushman and Donna Hill."[6] How can Russell claim that Vogel's biases are less visible while I assert they are pervasive and intrusive? Russell is wrong. Two factors explain this difference: (1) Russell shares Vogel's ideology (I do not share Vogel's positivism nor his naturalistic faith commitment and am therefore more likely to be able to separate the consequences of those ideological commitments) and has a hard time seeing Vogel's ideological commitments as anything except just the way the world

5. Sophia Mihic, Stephen G. Engelmann, and Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, "Making Sense in and of Political Science: Facts, Values, and 'Real' Numbers," in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and Its Epistemological Others,* ed. George Steinmetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 472.

6. William D. Russell, "He Was 'Game,'" review of *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet,* by Dan Vogel, *Dialogue* 38/3 (2005): 188. In this book review, Russell also endorses Vogel's positivism/naturalism.

is; Russell has difficulty seeing the ideology because he is uncritical of it. Additionally, (2) Russell and Vogel both share an older view of bias that ceased to be viable in the 1970s. We ought to stop speaking about bias in this facile way, as if ideology were the embroidery, the decoration, that can easily be separated from the research and interpretation of a work. Ideology is the warp and woof of the fabric. We live in post-Gadamerian and post-Althusserian times. Russell takes this simplistic version of positivism so for granted that he ironically asserts that only people who agree with him about the Book of Mormon can be considered open-minded: "I think the open-minded reader can hardly avoid coming away with the clear conclusion that the Book of Mormon is indeed Joseph's book and not an ancient document."[7] This easy talk about bias—permitting the researcher to make a general and vague confession to having one without articulating the consequences for the interpretation with which it is intermixed—is a hangover from the "continuing existence of a robust, if updated (and sometimes camouflaged or unconscious) positivism" by those who practice the social sciences.[8] Despite those Mormon revisionist historians who practice positivism by creating their own private definitions of the philosophical position, we ought to keep in mind that "positivism is still an important folk category among social scientists."[9] Until these researchers acquire an accurate and explicit knowledge of the pervasiveness of positivistic ideologies in their thought and writing, we have little chance of moving beyond the positivistic stage in Mormon history. Positivism is a dominant folk epistemology among historians and other researchers who do not understand its formal characteristics but practice it in debased and popularized versions.

Historical evidence does not speak to us free of all ideology, and each of us is deeply enmeshed in ideologies we too often take for granted.

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7. Russell, "He Was 'Game,'" 190.

8. George Steinmetz, "Introduction: Positivism and Its Others in the Social Sciences," in *Politics of Method in the Human Sciences,* 30. The social sciences singled out in this book for being dominated by positivism are sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, and history.

9. Steinmetz, "Introduction," 30.

> The need for evidence in historical writing has always been paramount, used as it is to illustrate and justify particular renderings and explanations of events. But without understanding the constructed nature of evidence itself, and then separating the need for evidence from its actual rhetorical function as that which both naturalizes and is naturalized by a writer's governing mythos, we forfeit a deeper understanding of the interpenetration between events, narrative, and historical interpretation.[10]

Vogel's "governing mythos" is one that denies that God acts in history (or at least that we can perceive such actions rationally) and assumes that it is religious believers who are ideologues, not their critics. Vogel commonly uses the word *apologist* (pp. xvii; 647 n. 34; 653 n. 59, for example) to describe those who disagree with him and believe in the traditional Mormon story. He does not acknowledge that he is also an apologist or defender of an ideology: "Ideology, like halitosis, is in this sense what the other person has."[11] The pejorative use of the word by Vogel implies that he and people who agree with him are less under the influence of ideological concerns than those of us who fundamentally disagree with him, just as Russell cannot be open-minded about people who disagree with him about the Book of Mormon's provenance and yet criticizes those opponents for being close-minded. One can be an apologist for a religious belief, but one can also be an apologist for an antireligious position such as positivism or naturalism (a religious apologist is only one specific use of the larger concept of *apologia,* as an encyclopedia such as *Wikipedia* shows).[12] By using the term pejoratively, and apologetically, the researcher prevents his or her own recognition of the ideology and, dealing with it critically, "the belief that one can avoid or transcend a transferential relation to

10. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 37.

11. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), 2; see David McLellan, *Ideology,* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 1 and 49.

12. "Apologetics," *Wikipedia,* en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologetics (accessed 9 January 2006).

the object of study tends to foster definitions that are covertly ideological and less subject to critical control than they might otherwise be."[13] This positivism attempts to deflect attention from the ideological ramifications of its own position. Positivism, and the positions advanced by its positivistic apologists, represents a "deliberate refusal to scrutinize the metaphysical and ideological interests that inform their readings."[14]

Vogel has a method for reading history. We could label these interpretive principles Vogel's Rules of Reductive Reading:

1. If a nineteenth-century fragment of rumor or gossip exists to throw Joseph Smith, his family, or associates in a bad light, highlight that hearsay evidence; always choose the most negative possible interpretive spin on events to discredit the Mormon founder.

2. If no such negative evidence exists, speculate it into existence or even make parallels if none emerge from the historical record; if no evidence can be gathered to demonstrate that a historical actor thought what you attribute to him or her, no conjecture can be beyond the realm of hypothetical possibility—just make things up, if you need to.

3. When reading a complex text such as the Book of Mormon, read it reductively so that it fits any remote parallel in Smith's life, family, or social environment; apply the most simplistic possible meaning to the narrative, ignoring significant details in the text or alternative readings that make more of the text.

4. If a historical actor claims divine communication or intervention, reinterpret those claims psychologically to fit a naturalistic bias, dismissing the explanation offered by the person who was present; if a historical actor claims divine intervention, reinterpret that claim as evidence of dishonesty.

Vogel adheres to a particular ideology that claims to know the limits of knowledge and reality. The conjecture he indulges in always conforms to that ideology.

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13. Dominick LaCapra, *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 154.

14. Gary A. Phillips, "Exegesis as Critical Praxis: Reclaiming History and Text from a Postmodern Perspective," in *Poststructural Criticism and the Bible: Text/History/Discourse, Semeia 51,* ed. Gary A. Phillips (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 17.

Vogel claims that he is not a positivist, just a naturalist. "A rejection of the supernatural does not automatically make one a positivist. It only means that one is a naturalist. The two positions are philosophically distinct."[15] Let's be more accurate about this assertion because the two positions are not at all distinct and the positivism common among historians has been broadly discredited for more than thirty years: while naturalism and positivism can be theoretically distinguished, in the real world they tend to overlap[16]

15. Dan Vogel, "Goff on Positivism at Signature," in *Mormon Metaphysics: Contemplations within Philosophy and Theology,* ed. Clark Goble, 28 September 2004, www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html (accessed 9 January 2006).

16. Roy Bhaskar discusses the relationship between naturalism and positivism. Naturalism emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in opposition to supernaturalism. In contemporary discussions, naturalism has three main elements: (1) materialism (material reality is all there is or all we can know), (2) both social and natural phenomena are capable of being explained by scientific approaches, and (3) facts and values can both be reasoned about (*Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* [New York: Verso, 1986], 118); what Bhaskar means by naturalism is often called by positivists the unity of science thesis. The method for obtaining truth is the same for all inquiry, in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. So far, little damage has been done to Vogel's assertions. Bhaskar notes that the history of naturalism delineated three different varieties of the position: (1) "a more or less unqualified naturalism, usually *positivistic* in complexion," (2) a hermeneutical tradition, and (3) a critical naturalism that derives mostly from Marx (Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism,* 120). Vogel's naturalism clearly does not belong in the latter two categories, but his use of empiricist claims and his insistence that, say, the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon had merely a subjective experience (subjective as opposed to objective; see pp. 442–43, 445, 446, 467, one that does not qualify as veridical, empirical knowledge) does fit the definition of the only true kind of evidence in a positivistic epistemology. These assertions classify Vogel's epistemological claims firmly within the positivistic camp, for positivists insist that, to be called knowledge, events must "be subject to the standard operational protocols of any empirical inter-subjective science" (Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism,* 121). Vogel denies that the witnesses' experience came through the physical senses; in other words, he asserts that it was not empirical. This commonsense version of positivism (in contrast to the much more technical positivism Bhaskar discusses) still endures in the social sciences: "If positivism is philosophically 'dead,' it survives and kicks in the sciences—as a current of thought in the natural sciences, and as considerably more than that in many of the human ones" (Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism,* 229). Bhaskar notes that the rationalist and empiricist claims to knowledge can no longer be reasonably supported (Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism,* 238). Similarly, Steve Smith also sees positivism as the larger category and naturalism as one of four main assumptions made by positivists. Steve Smith, introduction to *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond,* ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16. Dowe sees positivism as the narrower category and naturalism the larger one: The logical positivists asserted

and are often used synonymously.[17] Those who deny that God acts in the world in a way that would convince them demand the kind of empirical evidence of that action that would make the advocate both a naturalist and a positivist. On an Internet discussion board where Vogel tries to distinguish between positivism and naturalism and denies that he adheres to the former, he ends up convincing the other participants—who were initially reluctant to believe the charge—that he is a positivist.[18]

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that religious claims must be empirically verifiable if they are to be considered meaningful. "Under this strong version of naturalism, not only are science and religion in conflict, but religious assertions are meaningless and make no legitimate contribution to human knowledge, thought, or life." Phil Dowe, *Galileo, Darwin, and Hawking: The Interplay of Science, Reason, and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 3. Discussing the epistemology of a position is often necessary because Vogel accomplishes much of his ideological work through the assumptions he makes about truth, presuppositions he assumes most of his readers will share. When I equate positivism and naturalism, I am appealing to common philosophical usage. Vogel's use of terms relies on his own definition of the terms. Any time I use the word *naturalism,* the reader can feel free to use its synonym *positivism*.

17. H. O. Mounce says, "Scientific naturalism, or positivism, is a doctrine about the nature of reality as a whole. It is essentially *metaphysical,* though it often takes the guise of an attack on metaphysics." Mounce continues to articulate a position called scientific naturalism that Vogel would agree with: physical nature and reality are coextensive, and nature is revealed through scientific methods. H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 9. Mounce notes that this scientific naturalism is different from the Scottish naturalism of Hume because "scientific naturalism is a development out of empiricism" (Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism,* 8). This scientific naturalism is now the dominant position among intellectuals who use it to turn their inquiries into scientific naturalism, positivism, and empiricism. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism,* 11, uses the three terms interchangeably. The Web site ChangingMinds.org defines positivism in the standard way as knowledge founded on empirical evidence free of all metaphysics. It then defines the relationship between positivism and naturalism, with positivism being the larger category and naturalism (the unity of science thesis) as one of six tenets posited by positivism. See ChangingMinds.org/explanations/research/philosophies/positivism.htm (accessed 9 January 2006).

18. Clark Goble, "Goff on Positivism at Signature," in *Mormon Metaphysics,* 2 October 2004 posting and 3 October 2004 posting at www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html (accessed 9 January 2006). See also Blake Ostler, "Goff on Positivism at Signature," in *Mormon Metaphysics,* 3 October 2004 posting at www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html (accessed 9 January 2006). When charged with being a positivist, Vogel responded on multiple occasions by unleashing personal invective. The discussion was about the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, so the evidence and arguments Vogel was marshaling were essentially the same as in this biography.

Notice how philosophically informed commentators also note the broad overlap between positivism and its many allied positions, including naturalistic belief:

> The second category of presuppositions is itself, like the first, also a form of bias. Sometimes labeled "positivist," sometimes "verificationist," "scientistic," "empiricist," or even "physicalist," this category is intrinsically just as much an ideology as any other. Positivism in its more extreme forms has also been secularistic and antisupernaturalistic. Its underlying presupposition has been that no valid understanding of any event is possible that does not come to us directly from empirical observation. Only findings modeled by empirical methods and verificationist procedures, especially those utilized by the physical sciences, have been seen as sufficient or valid. Coming into vogue during the Enlightenment and becoming increasingly popular among historians during the nineteenth century, this view has consisted in a belief that *methodology,* in and of itself, could bring about a more *perfect,* if not a more total, comprehension of events. At last, a fully "objective," "pure," and "untainted" grasp of events could be possible. Cleansed of all bias and preconception, especially of anything supernatural or theological, a historian could distill "true facts" from more solid data. Solid data, taken from validated evidence, could produce facts. Facts of pristine authenticity, once established and rigorously tested, could speak for themselves.[19]

Naturalism is a circular position, for it will accept as evidence only historical claims that can be verified in naturalistic ways; when the researcher talks about those verificationist methods of validation, he or she then turns into a positivist. Vogel accurately claims that religious positions are circular in that they accept evidence that supports their positions and reinterpret contrary evidence so that it does not pose a danger. "The creation of a closed system and insulation against

19. Robert E. Frykenberg, *History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 316–17.

contrary evidence is nevertheless the norm for religious movements" (p. 239). He seems to think that this makes religious belief somehow different from, say, positivism or naturalism. But all belief systems do the same, particularly Vogel's, including defining naturalism and positivism as distinct concepts. So when Vogel claims that naturalism is natural and supernaturalism not, he is falling back on metaphysical presuppositions. This is how the rhetoric of naturalism/positivism works: "There is simply no reliable proof for the existence of the supernatural. Naturalism is a part of our everyday experience; supernaturalism is not" (p. xvi; see, in the block quotation above, the antisupernaturalism that Frykenberg associates with positivism). When you begin with positivistic presuppositions that define "reliable proof" in a positivistic way, you will end up with a claim such as this. In the footnote to his discussion of naturalism, Vogel articulates the assumptions of this ideology: "At heart, I am a rationalist and naturalist. I believe that the physical universe follows natural law, that it does not behave in supernatural or contradictory ways, that it functions without supernatural forces, and that it is unnecessary to go outside nature to explain what takes place within it" (p. 570 n. 39). Once a researcher accepts this metaphysical presupposition, the task of dismissing religious claims follows from the assumption. Alfred J. Ayer, archpositivist that he is, asserts that claims made by the religious believer are meaningless, for "as he says nothing at all about the world, he cannot justly be accused of saying anything false, or anything for which he has insufficient grounds. It is only when the theist claims that in asserting the existence of a transcendent god he is expressing a genuine proposition that we are entitled to disagree with him."[20] When propositions are asserted, then the believer is in opposition to science, according to this positivist position. For Ayer, a claim to having religious experiences is interesting only for what it reveals about the psychology of the believer, "but it does not in any way imply that there is such a thing as religious knowledge," for unless the theist "can formulate his 'knowledge' in propositions that are empirically verifi-

20. Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 116.

able, we may be sure that he is deceiving himself."[21] Just as Ayer rejects propositions that do not have sufficient empirical content to satisfy a positivist, Vogel says that different reports of the same vision undermine Smith's claim that the vision occurred: "The manner in which Smith introduced later priesthood concepts into his 1823 interview with the angel makes one wonder if he ever viewed the vision as an empirical event" (p. 44); later in the same paragraph Vogel says Joseph Smith's visions cannot be treated "as actual events." The epistemological question here is not about Smith but about whether Vogel will allow the event as real when it does not measure up to his requirements as an empirical event. Vogel is using the claims of empiricism/positivism. He adheres to a founding myth that somehow "apologists" are different from people who have a bias but are not apologists for an ideology. Ideology works best when its believers naturalize it ("naturalism is part of our everyday experience"); that is, they claim that it is just the way the world is, not the way it is interpreted under the influence of an ideology. But everyday experience is indeed influenced by the ideological assumptions we use to categorize that experience. "Events must be constituted as 'facts' before they can be subjected to analysis and take up their place in discourses of truth produced by the various human and social sciences of an epoch. . . . [H]istorical events are never given directly to perception but always come to the investigator in an already *enfigured* form, as reports, testimony, document, hearsay, opinion, or the like."[22]

Vogel has such a tenuous grasp on the philosophical notion of positivism that every time he asserts he cannot be a positivist, he provides further evidence that he is. Not only did Vogel convince other participants in the online discussion that he was a positivist, he also repeatedly said that Sterling McMurrin was not a positivist, an assertion easy to disprove since I merely had to cite a few of McMurrin's own claims about knowledge to demonstrate otherwise. Here is Vogel's misunderstanding about what positivism is:

21. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic,* 119–20.

22. Hayden White, "The Real, the True, and the Figurative in the Human Sciences," *Profession* 92 (1992): 15.

> I think the introduction to my biography makes it abundantly clear that I'm not a positivist. Positivist historians would not attempt an interpretive biography, nor would they draw on psychology and sociology. They certainly would not describe themselves as "ontological naturalists." Whereas a positivist seeks to establish history on positive grounds, I'm comfortable with interpretations that carry various degrees of probability. Hence, I would describe my position as basically a post-positivist ontological naturalist.[23]

In addition to his misunderstanding of naturalism, take this bizarre claim that Vogel cannot be a positivist because he draws from sociology and psychology. A pattern has emerged among Mormon revisionists from the beginning of the Mormon *Positivismusstreit* in the 1980s; these people invent peculiar private language definitions of positivism in order to protect an ideological position. Thomas Alexander, for example, asserted that positivism is possible only in the natural sciences, not the social sciences.[24] This odd claim runs directly counter to informed research, which acknowledges that the social sciences are still dominated by positivism.[25] A similarly uninformed definition of positivism was offered by Marvin Hill in his Mormon History Association presidential address: "By positivism, again, in simplest dictionary sense, I mean that history is taken to be potentially verifiable—that the mind can know the outside world as it is and was."[26] Hill then goes on to provide a definition of positivism from a general dictionary; contrary to Hill, a claim is not positivistic if the researcher claims the past is verifiable, only if the claim is that the only proper way to verify an assertion is with empirical evidence. According to Hill's definition, Vogel would be a positivist, but then

23. Dan Vogel, "Goff on Positivism at Signature," 28 September 2004 posting at www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html

24. Thomas G. Alexander, "Historiography and the New Mormon History: A Historian's Perspective," *Dialogue* 19/3 (1986): 32.

25. Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 226.

26. Marvin S. Hill, "Positivism or Subjectivism? Some Reflections on a Mormon Historical Dilemma," *Journal of Mormon History* 20/1 (1994): 3.

so would I and everybody else. Nobody defines the key term the ways Alexander, Hill, and Vogel do. I think we can use evidence to demonstrate that Ronald Reagan was wounded in an attempted assassination: eyewitness testimony, newspaper reports, physical evidence such as the bullets, videotape of the incident. I think we can verify that incident. That I maintain the incident is verified by evidence does not make me a positivist. A recent book on the topic of positivism, in fact, notes the "surprising longevity of positivism—especially in its latent, unexamined, or unconscious forms—in the human sciences."[27] We are seeing the latent surviving forms of positivism in Mormon history when commentators offer such strange definitions so that they and their ideological allies can continue to make positivistic claims without being labeled positivists. In other words, these definitions of positivism are apologetic private definitions that protect the way Mormon revisionists have traditionally privileged their own positivistic claims. Vogel's resort to psychology and sociology does not reassure his readers that he is not a positivist but does the opposite: "U.S. sociology still seems to be operating according to a basically positivist framework, perhaps a crypto-positivist one, if I can use that term without any conspiratorial connotations."[28] A study on the relationship between positivism and psychology notes the opposite of Vogel's claims: "In psychology the legacy [of positivism] is largely implicit even appearing from time to time as a militant antipositivism, while preserving intact some of the more self-destructive tenets of neopositivism."[29] Summarizing Henderikus Stam from the same collection of essays, Charles Tolman notes that, in psychology (as in Mormon history), "our rejection of positivism proves to be mainly in words only; it has not penetrated deeply into the accepted practice of mainstream psychology."[30] Vogel's embrace of positivistic assumptions is accompanied

27. Steinmetz, "Introduction," 3.

28. George Steinmetz, "Scientific Authority in the Transition to Post-Fordism: The Plausibility of Positivism in U.S. Sociology since 1945," in *Politics of Method in the Human Sciences,* 276.

29. Charles W. Tolman, introduction to *Positivism in Psychology: Historical and Contemporary Problems,* ed. Charles W. Tolman (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1992), 1.

30. Tolman, introduction to *Positivism in Psychology,* 2.

by a rejection of the philosophy in words only. Use of sociology and psychology needs, rather, to be viewed as a covert way the uncritical biographer smuggles in positivism from those disciplines. A reason for "positivism's uncanny persistence in the human sciences up to the present moment"[31] is easy to provide if researchers hold such ideologically invested and inaccurate definitions of the term. These people do not understand the concept and have an ideological interest in obfuscating the definition; they do not understand the most common variety of positivism I have raised here, let alone the more technical versions that dominate the social sciences and historiography. Vogel, Alexander, and Hill (among other Mormon revisionists) are apologists for positivism.

With an uncritical and covert positivism at work in a transparent and obvious way, it is natural for Vogel, when he classifies Joseph Smith's behavior, to impose his own positivistic epistemological presuppositions and say that religious experience is false consciousness. (I am adjusting Vogel's language to bring it into alignment with the theoretical discussion in the historiographical and philosophical literature.) He is then convinced that when Smith or his associates believe they were having a religious experience and communicating with the divine, the experience must be translated into naturalistic terms. Vogel uses the harshest of terms to redescribe religious claims: "As is no doubt apparent, my inclination is to interpret any claim of the paranormal—precognition, clairvoyance, telekinesis, telepathy—as delusion or fraud. I do not claim that the supernatural does not exist, for it is impossible to prove a negative. I maintain only that the evidence upon which such claims rest is unconvincing to me" (p. xii; note the collapse of the paranormal into the supernatural and then the dismissal of both as fraudulent). The evidence is unconvincing because Vogel accepts as evidence only that which would qualify under a naturalistic/positivistic regime. When Smith is able to tell people what happened to them while he was many miles away, Vogel uses language describing how confidence men fool their subjects—for example, with hot and cold readings (pp. 69–70; 377–78; 592–93

31. Steinmetz, "Introduction," 2.

nn. 13–15). When Peter Whitmer claims that his field was miraculously plowed, which permitted him to transport Smith and Cowdery as they moved to Fayette, Vogel translates that religious language into naturalistic/positivistic language about Whitmer being so distracted that he did not realize how much ground he had plowed and Smith's supposed deception of Whitmer when the latter arrived in Harmony (pp. 377–78). Similarly, when Whitmer is traveling on the road and relates another putatively religious experience with a stranger on that road, Vogel translates the event into naturalistic and psychological language implying that Vogel knows better what happened than the historical actors did: "This seems to be an instance where Whitmer's fairly reliable memory shifted over time to conform to his subsequent psychological needs. The first version is likely closer to the truth, at least as initially perceived by Whitmer" (p. 380). Vogel translates the claim into empiricist terms about perception/empirical experience; he then invents a naturalistic explanation: the stranger was not a divine messenger transporting the plates but, he suggests without a hint of evidence, it was "merely an old Methodist circuit preacher carrying his Bible to his next meeting" who disappeared mysteriously from the road (p. 381). The positivist has to intervene to deny the claims the historical actor provides in order to supply ones that accord with his own epistemology and ontology. The religious language has to be replaced with a naturalistic one, and that translation is done under the aegis of a metaphysical conception of reality.

The primary function of an ideology is to conceal from the person who adheres to it the fact that he or she is operating under the influence of that ideology. The creed works, in other words, by convincing the subject that he or she knows how the real world works and that the others who disagree are apologists or are otherwise operating under a false set of beliefs: "Ideologies can be seen as more or less systematic attempts to provide plausible explanations and justifications for social behaviour which might otherwise be the object of criticism. These apologia then conceal the truth from others, and perhaps also from the rationalizing subject itself."[32] An ideology conceals from the

32. Eagleton, *Ideology,* 52.

ideologue the fact that he or she adheres to a fundamental belief that structures the way he or she experiences the world and attempts to reorganize that world to conform to its preference. Making someone's ideology explicit is always hazardous because those ideologies are fundamental commitments and work best when they are concealed from the apologist. "Ideologies are actively engaged in furthering ends that are best furthered by not acknowledging their true natures."[33] So the ideologue—the apologist—must not only conceal from others the ideology at work but must also delude him- or herself.

Michael Mandelbaum, in *The Ideas That Conquered the World,* tells the anecdote of a girl eating at a friend's house. The friend's mother asks if she likes Brussels sprouts, to which she responds positively. The friend's mother serves her the vegetable, which remains untouched on the plate. The hostess says at the end of the meal, "I thought you said you like Brussels sprouts." The girl's reply is, "I do like them, . . . but not enough to eat them."[34] Dan Vogel is a positivist who bitterly resents being called a positivist. He wants no longer to be called one; he just does not want to be free of being a positivist enough to do what is necessary to make it happen—actually stop making positivistic claims. We can know when a man or woman has repented of positivism; he or she will confess and forsake it. Vogel is in positivistic denial, and his positivism is reductive because it consistently takes religious terminology and experience and then reduces them to psychological and naturalistic language that denies the former's religious meaning and veridical claims a priori. "The problem of reductionism is perhaps more accurately described as one of totalization: only this method, or only this hermeneutic of retrieval, or only this critique, or only this hermeneutic of suspicion can interpret what religion really is."[35] Vogel insists that religious claims to supernatural experience must be translated into his own positivistic language and explanation.

33. René Girard, *"To Double Business Bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 74.

34. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002), 353.

35. David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 100.

David Tracy notes, appropriately, that some religious believers have their own version of reductivism, insisting that a confessional explanation is the only adequate framework. Both the secularistic positivism of Vogel and the fundamentalist approach that insists on a single interpretive strategy are inadequate. "The difference between fundamentalist readings and secularist readings seems startling. But these are surface differences of answers, not of fundamental hermeneutical approaches."[36] Each of these interpreters insists that he or she has the method that delivers the final and convincing truth about religious belief. "The certainty of contemporary positivist and empiricist critiques of religion is well matched by the literalism and fundamentalism of religious dogmatists of all traditions."[37] The sociology of religion has long been the home of this type of reductionism:

> Although things have changed dramatically since, the sociological approach to the study of religion had among its roots a nineteenth-century rationalism or positivism which questioned and rejected religious notions as illusory. They were thought to be irrational and otiose in a modern society in which science as a mode of understanding of reality would predominate. Religious ideas would atrophy and die in the face of the superior conceptions and explanations of science. These thinkers saw religion as a natural phenomenon to be studied objectively and scientifically and explained like any other natural phenomenon in terms of underlying causes. This position is usually designated positivist and reductionist. Religion is "reduced" to underlying factors which produce it so that the reality of religious entities, experience, and so on, is denied. To explain it in such a way was largely to explain it away.[38]

So when Vogel says he uses ideas from psychology and sociology, this is how he smuggles his positivistic concepts into his work of

36. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity,* 101.
37. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity,* 101.
38. Malcolm Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

biography. But note that Vogel is using ideas here described as an older, nineteenth-century variety of sociology, not contemporary ones that contain a better understanding of religion and the role of the researcher of religion. Vogel is in denial about his own positivism. His readers ought not to be.

Vogel's book would have been considerably improved by a self-critical awareness of the role of ideology that a generic admission of bias does not address. All of us are apologists for an ideology because ideology is inescapable. "If you do not have an explicit politics—an ideology—then one will certainly have you."[39] I am not asserting that ideology is the alpha and omega of historical interpretation, for other interpreters, archival evidence, and other sources limit our interpretations; different historical accounts vary widely in ideological content. Vogel is uncritical about the impact of his own ideology. "It is, to begin with, too quickly assumed that the man of suspicion is himself unscathed by the defects which he denounces; ideology is the thought of my adversary, the thought of the *other. He* does not know it, but *I* do. The question, however, is whether there exists a point of view on action which is capable of extricating itself from the ideological condition of knowledge engaged in praxis."[40] A more sophisticated view of ideology needs to be acknowledged—all researchers have an ideology and that ideology sets limits to what the interpreter will consider as possible or reasonable explanations. I have read no work of historical explanation that has more intrusive and transparent ideological content than Vogel's biography of Joseph Smith.[41] When W. W. Meissner discusses the appropriate way to apply psychoanalytic insights to religious figures, he warns not to approach the topic the way Freud did, the way

39. Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 70.

40. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 224.

41. I have read many biographies over the past few years, and the only one in the same ballpark that uses guesswork so extensively to advance psychological speculation is James R. Mellow's biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), which has about one-tenth as much conjecture as Vogel's biography does with little of the ideological denigration present in Vogel's biography. Vogel's speculation almost always works to debase and attack Joseph Smith.

Vogel does: "The problem for Freud was that he was not a believer, . . . an objective or perceptive observer. His expressed views thus said more about his religious prejudices than about religion itself."[42] One does not have to be a religious believer to write a biography of a religious figure, but the danger is that one will become simplistic and reductive without considerable attention and care. According to Meissner, the dangers of doing psychobiography include the connection between the analyst's clinical experience and the interpretive scheme applied to the historical evidence. Vogel runs afoul of all the pitfalls Meissner warns about:

> Problems arise in the selection of data, in the combination of events into recognizable patterns, in the omission or underemphasis of aspects that do not fit the putative hypothesis, in proposing false connections, in mistaking conjectural hypothesis for historical fact, in allowing one's own attitudes or feelings about the subject to contaminate or influence the process of judgment or interpretation. The risk of fitting the data to the hypothesis by inappropriate selection or omission runs high. Keeping in mind that the psychobiographical approach carries with it little explanatory power that would allow it to reach beyond the conjectural, there is an understandable impulse on the part of the investigator to find certainty and a degree of factuality where none exists. Distorting factors can easily enter into the process that push in the direction of trimming the subject and his life to fit the procrustean bed of psychoanalytically generated hypothesis. The subject is trimmed to fit the model, rather than the model being designed to fit the subject and the rich complexity of his biography.[43]

Vogel's positivism and his antipathy for Joseph Smith are two of the limiting factors that diminish this biography, even as Vogel tries to diminish Smith and the Book of Mormon to make them smaller than they are.

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42. W. W. Meissner, "Methodological Issues in the Psychohistory-Psychobiography of Religious Figures," *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 31 (2003): 182.

43. Meissner, "Methodological Issues," 184–85.

Repeating Mistakes Typical of Psychohistory and Psychobiography

When interpreting the past using a dubious approach such as psychohistory, the reader would do well to discuss the theoretical debate that has been engaged about that approach. The point is for the researcher to be as aware as possible about his or her own ideological commitments to mitigate their uncritical impact. Vogel's ideology is so overwhelming that it suffocates the narrative. By a historian's engaging the ideas of those who disagree, the historian might see more clearly his or her own dominant ideology and tropes. Another way to reduce the uncritical application of an ideology is to use theoretical discussion to bring the history to a more abstract level. Vogel does neither.

Psychohistory and psychobiography are often faulted for being too free to speculate about what might have happened or what a person might have said or thought. Doing psychohistory too often means being liberated from the need to provide historical evidence for the researcher's claims.[44] Psychobiography and psychohistory are held in general disrepute among historians, so the incentive to avoid the label is strong.

44. Vogel may well believe that the label *psychobiography* does not apply to his position because he uses approaches in addition to his psychobiographical analysis, but then all psychobiographies gather traditional archival and secondary sources and apply other abstractions in addition to psychological categories. Keep in mind that Vogel also attempts to avoid being classified a positivist although his position is overwhelmingly and uncritically positivistic. Vogel asserts as one of his controlling ideas that "we may never fully know Smith's reasons, but we can confidently say that if he wrote the Book of Mormon, became a prophet, and founded his church as a pious invention, he possessed the psychological means to explain and justify such acts" (p. xxi). Vogel sets out to provide a positivistic/naturalistic explanation of these "psychological means." He makes a layman's use of psychological categories such as internalization (p. 28), insecurity about writing (pp. 120, 356), fictional alter egos (pp. 118, 132, 134, 135, 166, 177, 249, 284, 326–28, 343, 417), sibling rivalry (pp. 138, 145, 256, 350, 410), Oedipal conflict (pp. 227, 274–75, 352–53, 608 n. 8, 622 n. 17), rationalization of deception (pp. 348, 368), family conflict and its attendant psychological damage (p. 373), oral rage (pp. 374, 655 n. 31), inner conflict between the person Smith aspired to be and the person he was (p. 417), essentially between the id and either the ego or super-ego, and family systems theory and family dysfunction (pp. xx, 256, 571 n. 59, and numerous other places). Vogel uses psychological concepts in a rudimentary way to advance his ideological position throughout his biography so consistently that he ends up teaching the philosophies of positivism,

Vogel's psychobiography exemplifies the weaknesses of the genre. David Stannard remarks that, at least through 1980, psychohistory had not produced any historical works worth noting. "While certainly some works of psychohistory are vastly superior to others, little, if any, psychohistory is good history."[45] In all fairness, Stannard is a strong detractor of the approach, but (unlike, say, Jacques Barzun's *Clio and the Doctors*) his criticisms are fair and informed. It is useful to survey the general disrepute that psychohistory has earned among historians and then measure those shortcomings against Vogel's psychobiography.

Many who practice psychohistory do so without being qualified. Robert Young refers to the "embarrassing excesses of psychohistory and psychobiography." For Young, psychobiography tends to project an individual's assumed psychological problems on the movement the person is associated with. Young here praises just one psychohistorian—Victor Wolfenstein, who is the exception among psychohistorians because he is both a professionally trained historian and a properly qualified psychoanalyst, one of a "small number of people similarly qualified, but not many." Psychohistorians who lack one of these two qualifications inevitably produce bad history, Young implies, manifesting these embarrassing excesses.[46] Psychobiographers who lack both qualifications would, based on Young's judgment, produce doubly incompetent psychobiography. Similarly, Peter Loewenberg notes that, to be successful, the psychohistorian needs to be trained in two professional fields, history and clinical psychology. Professional psychologists who offer historical interpretations are too often criticized for the crudity of their

mingled with psychohistory. Positivism is the basso continuo that ties his entire composition together, with numerous positivistic variations on psychohistorical motifs liberally scattered throughout.

45. David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), xiii.

46. Robert M. Young, "The Psychoanalysis of Sectarianism," at human-nature.com/rmyoung/papers/paper19h.html (accessed 29 November 2005). This is the text of a talk given to the British Psychological Society, Psychotherapy Section, Scientific Meeting on 'Impasse in Political Conflict' London, 20 November 1993. It has been published in the British Psychological Society, Psychotherapy Section Newsletter 15 (1994): 2–15. I have read Young elsewhere also praise Peter Gay's biography of Freud.

historical attempts. Professional historians who wander into psychology do so at great risk. "The ultimate synthesis must take place in the mind of a psychohistorian professionally trained in both disciplines if the research and conceptualizations are to have integrity as both historical and psychological accounts."[47] Professional training as a historian combined with clinical training as a psychologist—that is a rare combination of skills indeed.

Stannard, no fan of psychohistory, notes that the approach itself is faulty. "It is a premise of this book that the best *possible* psychohistory would still be bad history because of the limitations imposed by the weaknesses of the underlying theoretical structure."[48] He gives the example of Freud analyzing Leonardo da Vinci, which is shocking just for the paucity of evidence accessible to Freud—resulting in the most far-reaching historical conclusions. Stannard notes that this is still "one of the finest and most restrained"[49] examples of psychohistory ever produced, which means that the subdiscipline started at a low point and declined from there. This critic notes that psychohistories suffer from four consistent problems, none of which seems to me to be exclusive to psychohistorians but which might be more common among them because of the theoretical poverty of the approach.

The first deficiency concerns problems of fact. For psychohistorians this includes "fiction writing to 'fill gaps' in the historical record."[50] This is a problem Vogel shares with Fawn Brodie. In his biography of Martin Luther, Erik Erikson, one of the better practitioners of psychohistory, cites an anecdote based on such thin evidence (gossip from Luther's enemies;[51] Vogel too often bases his conclusions on gossip

47. Peter Loewenberg, "Psychohistory," in *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States,* ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 412.

48. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 21, emphasis in original.

49. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 22. Peter Gay, though a fervent supporter of Freud and psychohistory, admits that Freud's venture into da Vinci's biography is badly done. *Freud for Historians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 182. Freud also ventured into psychohistory when he coauthored a study of Woodrow Wilson.

50. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 22.

51. Not only does Erikson accept uncritically the reports of Luther's theological enemies, but these reports are fourthhand accounts (much the same tactic Vogel resorts to).

offered by Joseph Smith's enemies), and the "event" later becomes "fact" for Erikson.[52] When Vogel invents conflicts among the Smith brothers because they "must" have occurred for the strife in the Book of Mormon to be so prominent, he falls into this difficulty.

A second weakness of psychohistory involves problems of logic. The psychobiographer is, according to Stannard, particularly susceptible to *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacies. "So long as *B* is found to exist, it is *assumed* that *A must have* happened since *B* is a psychoanalytically posited *consequence* of *A*."[53] Stannard may be right to call this fallacy *post hoc* because the psychobiographer must posit a questionable causal relationship between a hypothetical childhood event and later adult behavior. The reasoning also seems to be an instance of affirming the consequent. Without a historically attested childhood event, the historian is tempted to assert that the earlier event must have occurred because the adult event occurred: If *A,* then *B.* We know *B* happened. Therefore *A* must have taken place also. The example Stannard gives in psychobiography is Michael Paul Rogin's biography of Andrew Jackson, with the biographer facing the same problem Freud had with Leonardo, Erikson with Luther, and Vogel with Joseph Smith: "no information on his subject's early childhood; that is, in the logical sequence, no *A*."[54] So, like other psychohistorians when they face this difficulty, Rogin makes up the childhood evidence about Andrew Jackson that is lacking in the historical record. The *post hoc* logical fallacy is something of which all historians must beware, but the psychobiographer is particularly susceptible to it for "the psychohistorian raises the odds almost to the point of certainty that he will fall prey to the fallacy, since he is adding to the pitfalls of historical analysis an explanatory system that has itself rarely addressed and has never dealt adequately with this dilemma to which

Roland H. Bainton, "Psychiatry and History: An Examination of Erikson's *Young Man Luther,*" in *Psychohistory and Religion: The Case of "Young Man Luther,"* ed. Roger A. Johnson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 42. Bainton does not dismiss the report because it is fourthhand; he just wants the reader to know its troublesome provenance.

52. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 22–23.
53. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 24.
54. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 25.

it is intimately tied."[55] Izenberg urges that psychohistorians develop more sophisticated methodological reflection to avoid the typical issues raised by the explanatory tool. "One of the most serious objections, for example, rests on the paucity of evidence about the early childhood of historical figures, with the result that psychohistorical explanations may become circular: hypotheses about early developments are speculatively deduced from adult events and then used to explain those events."[56] This weakness in the larger field well describes the problems of psychobiography in Mormon studies. Vogel's biography suffers from this very circularity as does Brodie's biography and other works on psychology and Joseph Smith.

The third weakness of psychohistory emerges from problems of theory. "This problem involves the *method* that the psychohistorian uses to invent the facts of a subject's childhood before showing those facts to be the causes of adult behavior."[57] Stannard notes that no psychohistorian even questions whether or not psychoanalytic theory is valid. Regarding explanations of Nixon's and Hitler's adult behavior, the idea that the characters are projecting their own shortcomings on others is taken for granted without ever asking if projection exists. A naturalistic psychobiographer such as Vogel must translate the religious language of the historical actors into his own methodological framework that denies the religious claims. But one ought to do so with caution and restraint. "What right does the historian have to dismiss or denigrate the importance of the intellectual processes by which historical thinkers have arrived at their beliefs and refer instead to unconscious impulses, phantasies, defenses, or conflicts in order to explain them?" Izenberg answers his own question by referring to this translation process as the traditional "problem of reductionism."[58] Biographers should be cautious regarding the abuse potential caused by reductive analysis. Rather than assuming up front that the accounts provided by the historical witnesses are inaccurate or deceptive, the more appropriate

55. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 71.

56. Gerald Izenberg, "Psychohistory and Intellectual History," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 139.

57. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 26.

58. Izenberg, "Psychohistory and Intellectual History," 140.

method is to take the sources at face value until other reasons emerge to question them; Vogel assumes as a foundational principle that Joseph Smith is a consistent liar and therefore, unsurprisingly, finds him to lie all the time. "The hermeneutics of suspicion always runs the risk of arbitrariness and therefore should intervene only in the last instance, when no other interpretation appears possible any longer."[59] By suspecting that any assertion of divine intervention is proof that the believer is lying, Vogel imposes his own ideological position too early and too suffocatingly on the historical testimony.

The fourth shortcoming is one of culture. The psychohistorian does not understand the larger culture in which the person being explained operates. Stannard's main example here is Fawn Brodie's biography of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson's use of the word *mulatto* to describe the color of soil is not a hidden clue to Jefferson's relationship or preoccupation with Sally Hemings; the term was commonly used by many people in Jefferson's day.

> If this sort of silliness were confined to Brodie's book, it would be merely (to use one of her own favorite words) curious; but it is not. All of the books mentioned in the previous several pages share, in varying degrees, the problem of making much of matters that are notable only for their lack of singular importance once they are placed in their cultural context. All of them also share all of the other problems that have been pointed out. The studies of Luther, Jackson, Hitler, and Jefferson all build complex arguments on virtually nonexistent evidence; all violate elementary rules of logic in developing those arguments; and all analyze data using theories that fail to withstand empirical examination and experimental testing.[60]

These failings in psychohistorical studies are understandable because they are based on an impoverished theoretical foundation, "for all of

59. Jean-Luc Marion, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology,'" in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism,* ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 25.

60. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 29–30.

these works are guided by a collection of hypotheses—one version or another of psychoanalytic theory—that itself suffers from problems of illogic, experimental nonconfirmation, and cultural parochialism."[61]

Stannard notes that, "from the earliest endeavors to write psychohistory to those of the present, individual writings of would-be psychohistorians have consistently been characterized by a cavalier attitude toward fact, a contorted attitude toward logic, an irresponsible attitude toward theory validation, and a myopic attitude toward cultural difference and anachronism."[62] Even apologists for psychohistory admit that reductive histories are common among this lot. Peter Gay writes that "reductionism appears so besetting a defect of psychohistories that historians have seen it woven into their very fabric, an ineradicable and fatal flaw."[63] But Gay denies that it is built into the method of psychohistory; it is accidental that unrestrained speculation happens to be present in almost all psychohistories.

Psychohistory and psychobiography have earned the general disrepute in which they are held. Even defenders of the method admit that most psychohistories still suffer from the problems apparent, beginning with Freud, in applying psychoanalysis to historical figures:

> The naive self-assurance of the first psychoanalysts, the apparent ease with which they could, on the basis of a few key pieces of evidence and a few key theoretical concepts, arrive at original "discoveries" concerning the people studied, as well as the total absence of historical training on the part of the analysts—all these factors made the psychobiographies of the heroic period (and many later psychobiographies as well) no more than dilettantish studies, superficial at best.[64]

Vogel's speculations and logical problems are not just representative of the subfield of psychobiography but take the excesses and weaknesses of psychohistory to extremes.

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61. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 30.
62. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 147.
63. Gay, *Freud for Historians,* 185.
64. Saul Friedländer, *History and Psychoanalysis: An Inquiry into the Possibilities and Limits of Psychohistory,* trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 43.

Speculation in Joseph Smith Stock

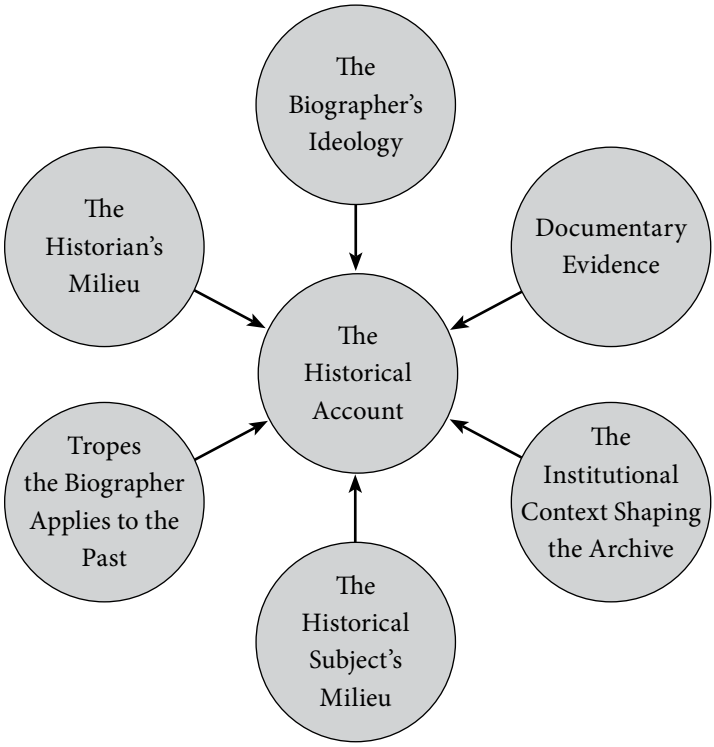
> Some writers have used psychological categories as weapons with which to attack and discredit political figures, in expositions that make leaps directly from infantile traumata to public political conduct.[65]

If you removed all the "perhaps" phrases (and synonymous elements) from Vogel's book, you would end up with a pamphlet. He uses several approaches to make up evidence when he cannot find textual sources to do the ideological work he requires. For example, when Vogel draws a parallel between Abinadi's absence from King Noah's domain for two years and Smith's absence from Harmony, he fabricates his comparison out of a mistaken chronology—his mistake. When he accuses Joseph Smith Sr. of adultery in the absence of any historical or documentary evidence, he again imagines it into existence. Vogel imagines what someone might be thinking by using a *perhaps* or a *might have* qualifier. The qualifiers might be an indication of caution, but, as Vogel uses them, they are ways he signals that he is inventing. This tactic is highly vulnerable to ideological abuse, as happens too often in this book. Think graphically of a spatial metaphor. All historical explanations have ideological content. But often that ideology is controlled by textual evidence, other interpreters' accounts, the metaphors we use to explain the past, and a host of other factors. We can think of ideological considerations on a continuum.

Vogel's biography has to be placed far to the ideological side of this continuum. Ideology steps in to shape the message, questioning Joseph Smith when he speaks his own mind about his motives and experience but rarely doing that when someone speaks ill of Smith,

65. Loewenberg, "Psychohistory," 414.

his family, and his associates. Perhaps a representation of Vogel's ideological content with more dimensions would be more helpful.



One could easily come up with more elements that contribute to the final historical product (represented here in the middle), with those circles on the outside being factors contributing to the content and shape of the center circle. For Vogel, that center circle would be overwhelmingly dominated by one component—the biographer's ideology.

Virtually every page of Vogel's biography drips with the animosity he feels for Joseph Smith and those associated with him. This is a serious problem in psychobiography. It is such a consistent shortcoming that when a psychohistorian deals with the subject using respect, that approach is notable. Erik Erikson's biography of Martin Luther reports negative information about the subject (his putative anal fixation, for example), "but not with a pejorative intent. The admira-

tion and respect of the biographer for his subject as a *persona* and for Luther's historical role is evident throughout."[66]

When Vogel is not trying to discredit Smith, he is just plain mean-spirited about the Smith family. In a bit of conjectural character assassination totally without any basis, Vogel raises the charge that Joseph Smith Sr. was an adulterer. When the Book of Mormon (Jacob 2:31–35) criticizes the Nephites for practicing polygamy, Vogel makes the speculative leap that this indicates that Joseph Jr. was criticizing his father for being unfaithful. I will italicize the phrases where Vogel foregrounds this guesswork:

> In 1834, Joseph Sr. confessed, without being specific, that he had "not always set that example before my family that I ought." *Maybe* the years of alienation from Lucy and his lack of sobriety had pushed him to other offenses. This *would explain* the emotionally charged doctrinal debates in the Smith household and why Joseph Jr. *would have felt* so desperate about his family, particularly his father. *It may also explain* why Joseph Jr. relentlessly attacked Universalism and why he became such an uncompromising advocate of obedience to the basic commandments, why he placed sexual crimes above all others excluding murder, and why he was so harsh toward others who were guilty of sexual misconduct. Finally, *it may explain* how he could condemn adultery while at the same time fraternizing with other women himself. Smith identified with his father and *may have found* it difficult to resist his example. (pp. 452–53, emphasis added)

Admitting to not always setting the right example is a far cry from breaking marriage vows. This is irresponsible, even if the footnote tries to back away from responsibility for doing this hatchet job on both father and son. That footnote, betraying a sense of the over-the-top element of this charge, says, "I raise this interpretation as a possibility only" (p. 671 n. 56). One can only contrast the tone of Vogel's book toward its subject with the generosity of spirit demonstrated by

66. Loewenberg, "Psychohistory," 418.

Robert Remini toward Joseph Smith in his biography of the Mormon prophet.[67] Remini does not believe in the prophetic claims made by Smith any more than Vogel does, but his tone is not one of constantly attacking, persistently debunking, insistently debasing or questioning motives.

If Vogel lacks even half a rumor on which to base the previous libel, imagine what he can do with gossip. He carries this attack mode on in other places—for example when Joseph Smith was arrested and put on trial 1 July 1830, in South Bainbridge, for disorderly preaching. After Josiah Stowell and Jonathan Thompson testified in support of Smith, Stowell's daughters also testified. According to Vogel, Smith reported that "they were individually 'examined, touching my character, and conduct in general but particularly as to my behavior towards them both in public and private.' Smith said 'both [women] bore such testimony in my favor, as left my enemies without a pretext on their account'" (p. 514). With sworn testimony in Smith's favor, Vogel goes about undermining those witnesses with innuendo and gossip. "Of course, Stowell's daughters had no reason to cooperate with the prosecution. Despite the women's denials, *one wonders if* there was some substance to the prosecution's expectations about how they would testify" (p. 514; I have added the emphasis, once more, to highlight Vogel's speculative assault). He then cites gossipy accounts with the conclusion: "In light of Smith's later, well documented polygamous activities, the early rumors cannot be dismissed too quickly even though no extant evidence provides further details about these accusations" (p. 514). Vogel's predilection to accept the most defamatory comments in opposition to sworn court testimony tells us something about his preference for libelous, scandalous, and defamatory evidence of whatever quality. At one point, he even prefers third- or fourthhand evidence provided by Governor Thomas Ford—evidence that he admits is "garbled" on at least some points—as his synthesizing element regarding the eight Book of Mormon witnesses (p. 468). Vogel impeaches firsthand evidence if it supports the claims of Smith, preferring much less reliable—but ideologically useful—hearsay.

67. Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* (New York: Viking, 2002).

Vogel guesses what Smith might be thinking so often and to such great ideological consequence that providing representative examples would be tedious. I will, however, provide just a few examples of how he uses such methods to find parallels to Book of Mormon narratives. While analyzing the incident of Nephi's broken bow in which Nephi returns successfully from a hunt, Vogel says, "In fantasy, it was perhaps a role Joseph had played out in his own mind countless times" (p. 137). If one can invent fantasies supported by no comments, writings, or accounts from the historical actors, the researcher has broad liberty to impute any idea to the biographical subject. Imagine what a biographer could do with Vogel's, his book reviewer's, or the reader's life if he or she took these liberties with the record.

In a series of madcap parallels, Vogel says of Amalickiah when he first gains Lehonti's confidence, then assassinates him by administering poison (Alma 47; again, I will italicize the speculative markers), and ultimately takes over military leadership that Lehonti is "a *possible link* to father Lehi. However, Lehonti's subsequent death by poisoning *calls to mind* Alvin, Joseph's surrogate father, who died of poisoning. Although Joseph had nothing to do with this, he *may have felt guilt* about stepping into his older brother's role. *It is common* for surviving siblings to feel such guilt, *especially if* misfortune was preceded by envy. Nevertheless, Alvin's death helped Joseph move closer to uniting his family under his leadership" (p. 256). But Alvin is Joseph's surrogate father only in Vogel's mind and psychological theory.

Both recent literary theory and historiography have broken down the traditional walls between the writing of literature and the writing of history. With the recognition that history and literature are often closely related ways of understanding the past, and that the historian, like the fiction writer, is in the business of constructing narratives, a recent hybrid of the two approaches has emerged. Historiographic metafiction is fiction in which the author takes up historical characters or events (the historiographic part) while feeling free to alter the record to help the reader understand it better (the fictive part). Think of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime,* Graham Swift's *Waterland,* T. C. Boyle's *Water Music,* Susan's Daitch's *L.C.,* Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's*

Parrot, or Don DeLillo's *Libra* as parade examples of fiction that take up history in these terms. The *meta-* part is represented by an acute self-consciousness that the narrative is shaped for present purposes. These novelists often provide accounts of the same event by different witnesses (*L.C.*) or include multiple and conflicting endings (John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) in order to convey the tentativeness of all realistic narratives. The writer is critical about his or her own way of shaping the past to serve present needs. Like recent work in historiography that emphasizes the similarities between literature and history, historiographic metafiction points out the constructed—fictive—nature of all narratives. Vogel uses psychological theories and speculation to invent what Joseph Smith and his contemporaries might have thought or experienced. This is what Stannard refers to as using fiction to supplement the historical account. Vogel is uncritical about his own ideology and the tools he uses (psychological and speculative) to transform Mormon belief (consequently, the *meta-* portion of historiographic metafiction does not apply), so I will call what we have in his biography of Joseph Smith a work of historiographic fiction. Vogel's work is more in a new genre with few members (outside psychohistories), such as Simon Schama's *Dead Certainties* and Edmund Morris's *Dutch*.

Simplistic Textual Analysis

> In the final analysis, what one reads out of the text depends on what one reads into it.[68]

> Historians see in their material only what they are prepared to perceive.[69]

> Almost anything can be read into any book if you are determined enough.[70]

68. Patrocinio P. Schweickart and Elizabeth A. Flynn, introduction to *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts,* ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), xii.

69. Loewenberg, "Psychohistory," 409.

70. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (San Diego: Harvest, 1958), 99.

Vogel claims to approach the Book of Mormon as autobiographical not to "determine its modernity or antiquity but rather to achieve a deeper understanding of its contents and what it reveals about Smith" (pp. xviii–xix); the Book of Mormon is one of the "primary sources containing possible clues to his inner conflicts and state of mind" (p. xviii). But its very stream-of-consciousness production precludes the book's being deep and complex; Vogel cannot countenance a sophisticated Book of Mormon because "Smith's method of dictation did not allow for rewriting. It was a more-or-less stream-of-consciousness composition" (p. xix). He means by "deeper understanding" his effort to probe deeper into Joseph Smith's psyche. This is why his reading must necessarily be reductive and simplistic. He is committed to a superficial book that reflects a rustic's talented and inventive mind. Vogel has asserted that the more you study the Book of Mormon, the less complex it appears.[71]

This passage alone has two tropes in it: (1) scripture as autobiographical novel and (2) the dictation of the Book of Mormon as stream-of-consciousness experience. The first simile is circular (though not necessarily viciously circular), for it will lead to the search for evidence that would make the book parallel to Joseph Smith's experience—ignoring any evidence of complexity or sophistication in the text, ignoring details that cannot be construed as parallel to Smith's biography. The second comes to us from literary criticism, and since Vogel is analyzing the book as a literary text (a novel—occasionally he suggests an "inspired" novel), that seems to be where the vocabulary comes from. But note here that stream of consciousness is not in literary theory a term we apply to an author (in this case Joseph Smith) but to a narrator or character. We do not discuss the stream of James Joyce's consciousness or Virginia Woolf's; we discuss the stream of Molly Bloom's or Mrs. Dalloway's consciousness. If we use

71. Doug Fabrizio, interview with Brent Lee Metcalfe, Dan Vogel, Thomas Murphy, and Trent Stephens, Radio West on KUER, 26 August 2002. The file used to be available at the Signature Books Web site www.signaturebooks.com/news.htm (no longer available). This comment comes twenty-seven minutes into the sound file. Rather dismissively, Vogel (although it is hard to tell; it could be Metcalfe) notes that those FARMS people have posited the complexity of the scripture, but he flatly dismisses the assertion.

the term the way William James did—the phrase's originator—then all thoughts for every person are stream-of-consciousness events. With this stream-of-consciousness metaphor, we can more accurately get at what Vogel is doing. In his book, Joseph Smith is a character, and Vogel is attempting to follow the stream of consciousness of a historiographic fictional character named Joseph Smith, much of whose thought must be invented by using psychological jargon and creative thought processes (invented by Vogel) much as novels explore a narrator's or character's consciousness.

That his readings would end up being superficial is not surprising; Vogel posits that the text is superficial from the start. He denies that scripture can be complex in the simplistic way he conceives of complexity: the rapid pace of dictation with little or no revision did not permit reworking the text (p. xix). In addition, Vogel, as a reader, has no track record or capability of reading a complex text in a complex way. One does not have to believe that the Book of Mormon is an ancient work to acknowledge its complexity. Mark Thomas's book *Digging in Cumorah* is an argument that the book is modern but at the same time a complex work of literature.[72]

Dominick LaCapra says that historians are professionally trained as nonreaders. Self-taught biographers such as Vogel go one step beyond and are specifically unprofessionally nontrained nonreaders by absorbing the dominant ethos of the historical profession without having the methodological and historiographical preparation professional historians encounter in graduate training. "In a sense, historians are professionally trained not to read. Instead, they are taught to use texts in rather narrow, utilitarian ways—to 'strip mine' or 'gut' them for documentary information. Indeed, historians tend to appreciate texts to the extent that they provide factual information about

72. Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999). Thomas explicitly discusses the complexity of the book on pages 48 and 85–86, although he does not go far enough in reading the book in a sophisticated way; we should still see his book as a refutation of Vogel's inability to read the book as a thick narrative.

given times and places."[73] Such strip mining of the text makes up the overwhelming majority of Vogel's biography. Hans Kellner says of LaCapra's observation that "this statement does not say that historians are not professionally trained to read, but that they are precisely trained *not* to read. The sort of reading that is proper to historical work is a mitigated one, which slights not only most of the true complications inherent in written texts, but also the necessary dialogical interplay of reader and text and the conflict of voices within a text itself."[74] Kellner wants historians to learn a more textualist form of reading that does justice to complexity and contradiction in texts. "It seems that 'reading' in the modern critical sense is not only deemed 'not historical' per se, but is also something that a historian *ought* not to do, apparently on moral grounds, because questioning language also calls into question the nature of the 'truth of history' that is constituted by language."[75] Since professional historians tend to view sources in strict documentary ways ("all texts and documents are assimilated to a homogeneous status as source or evidence that enables the determination of certain findings"),[76] they frequently avoid engaging literary or philosophical (and I would add religious) texts that demand so much more of a reader. "Typically, literary or philosophical texts are reduced to the status of unreliable sources because they do not yield solid evidence or clear-cut facts about empirical states of affairs."[77] Vogel takes this antireading propensity among historians to extremes, reducing the Book of Mormon to a simple mirror of Joseph Smith's world and then making it into a text as simplistic as his own assumptions about it in order to solve this problem. He seems to show no awareness that his is a mitigated and simplistic reading, and he is not even aware that he is engaging in this kind of reductive behavior. According to

73. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 339.

74. Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 11–12.

75. Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation,* 12.

76. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 30.

77. LaCapra, *History and Reading,* 30.

LaCapra, this "synoptic or paraphrastic approach" attempts to make the text as lucid and clear as possible while it "downplays nuances and is geared to the reconstruction of the object, often to the exclusion (or occlusion) of a more dialogic, critical exchange with the past and its artifacts."[78]

The older positivistic view of historiography that Vogel represents has been eclipsed by philosophically sophisticated historians who take seriously the challenges presented by theory. Those historians who continue to follow older models have a hard time adjusting to the new circumstances; those "grounded in an epistemological foundationalism, have offered few convincing rejoinders to philosophers' and theorists' critiques of this assumption."[79] Clark cites Beverley Southgate, who asserts that those who still uphold some older variety of historiographical confession often see themselves as besieged, and their reaction is often one of aggression.[80] This describes quite well Vogel's personal attacks on those who point out his positivism. The professional response is not to engage in personal attacks but to offer some alternative theory that is believable. But such analysis calls for self-criticism and philosophical sophistication, exactly what the historical profession has drained out of the discipline, for such a critical approach calls on historians to do "what historians do worst, or at least badly: reflecting on epistemology."[81] History must be reconceptualized, and, again citing Southgate, Clark notes that the answer is not impoverished intellectual attacks on others, but that positivistic historians must "set forth more explicitly the philosophical underpinnings of their subject."[82] Historians must, in other words, be more theoretical and self-critical about their own ideological and philosophical presuppositions rather than just taking them for granted.

78. LaCapra, *History and Reading,* 34–35.

79. Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 25.

80. Clark, *History, Theory, Text,* 26.

81. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 15.

82. Clark, *History, Theory, Text,* 27.

Historians, by training, are an antiphilosophical and antitheoretical lot; Hayden White recently noted that his own work was advanced to combat the dominant positivism in historiography: "It is against positivism, against a positivistic notion of history [that White wrote *Metahistory*]. The discipline of history is systematically antitheoretical. Historians think of themselves as being empirical, and they are, but they are not philosophically empirical. They are empirical in a commonsense way—in an ordinary, everyday way."[83] Other fields (literary criticism and anthropology, for example) have been intensely theorized over the past thirty years. History is undergoing such philosophical retooling now. Just as a literary critic will be criticized for not articulating the theoretical basis of his or her approach, in a decade all historians will be found lacking to the extent they cannot lay out their theory or ideological and philosophical commitments. This "aversion historians instinctively have to 'theory'"[84] needs to be overcome if historians are going to be more self-critical about their work. Vogel manifests many of the anxieties prevalent in the historical profession—including the anxiety that he is a positivist with the determination to engage in ad hominem attacks if called a positivist—without the philosophical background to deal with the issues adequately. "Historians operate on the basis of 'tacit knowledge' that they rarely make explicit themselves, and that they pass along to their students in the form of transmitted anxieties."[85] Just a few examples show how underperforming readers such as Vogel read the Book of Mormon down to their own reading level.

Marriage Abduction, Lamanite Daughters, and Isaac Hale's Daughter

I will provide a few examples to demonstrate Vogel's desiccated readings of the Book of Mormon alongside alternative readings that bring literary competence to the text. The Mormon scripture tells of

83. Hayden White, interview, in Ewa Domańska, *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 15.

84. Domańska, *Encounters,* 84. The words are Frank Ankersmit's.

85. Hans Kellner, interview, in Domańska, *Encounters,* 41.

the priests of Noah who escaped, fleeing from their own people, leaving their wives and children behind to save their own lives. The priests later lay in wait, abducting Lamanite girls to be their new wives. Here is Vogel's account of the story: "Noah's priests escape into the wilderness. Two years later, they resurface to capture twenty-four Lamanite women, carrying them into the wilderness to become their wives (19:29; 20:1–26)" (p. 193). The following is the analysis Vogel devotes to this story, attempting to make a parallel to Joseph Smith's life:

> Ironically, the priests have won over the Lamanites because they abducted Lamanite women to be their wives. Still, Smith would understand this situation, having eloped with Emma, who thereafter was the only thing standing between him and Isaac's wrath. From Isaac's point of view, Joseph, within two years of having met Emma (cf. 19:29), had sneaked back into town and "stolen" his daughter. In pleading with the Lamanite army for their husbands, the Lamanite women reveal that they are no longer captives but voluntary wives. Emma had done likewise with Joseph. Thus, through marriage, former enemies became uncomfortable allies. (p. 194)

Sometimes, one must point out the obvious. Abduction is not the same thing as eloping. Vogel's parallelomaniac comparison between Joseph Smith and this episode from the Book of Mormon does not even have the most basic element in common. I use Samuel Sandmel's definition of parallelomania: "that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction."[86] The way to avoid the extravagance of parallelomania is to examine the specific passages and their larger contexts.[87] Selected and isolated elements often look parallel, but the examination of details frequently undermines the connection.

86. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1.
87. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," 2.

I have analyzed this story elsewhere.[88] Vogel does not refer the reader to alternative readings of the Book of Mormon that would place in question his naïve and forced comparisons; yet a writer should acknowledge readings of which he is aware that undermine his or her own position, if for no other reason than to reassure the reader that the writer is being fair with evidence:

> Dishonest apologists insist on these standards for everyone but themselves and in every subject but their own. Honest apologists avoid suppressing material evidence, even as they seek to downplay the significance of controversial information. Traditional Mormon history has had (and continues to have) both honest apologists and dishonest apologists. Many "New Mormon Historians" are also honest apologists for what they see as the essential truths of Mormon theology and the basic goodness of the Mormon experience. These New Mormon Historian apologists often seek to downplay the significance, or "to put into context," any evidence they find which may discomfort believing Mormons. Traditional Mormon apologists discuss such "sensitive evidence" only when this evidence is so well known that ignoring it is impossible. Personally, I have always tried to write both as a New Mormon Historian and an honest apologist for the Mormon faith and experience.[89]

D. Michael Quinn goes on to assert that failure to note contradictory evidence for the reader is dishonest: Researchers

> are certainly "dishonest or bad historians" if they fail to acknowledge the existence of even one piece of evidence they know challenges or contradicts the rest of their evidence. If this omission of relevant evidence is inadvertent, the author

88. Alan Goff, "The Stealing of the Daughters of the Lamanites," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon,* ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 67–74.

89. D. Michael Quinn, introduction to *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past,* ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), xiii n. 5.

> is careless. If the omission is an intentional effort to conceal or avoid presenting the reader with evidence that contradicts the preferred view of the writer, that is fraud whether by a scholar or non-scholar, historian or other specialist. If authors write in scholarly style, they are equally dishonest if they fail to acknowledge any significant work whose interpretations differ from their own.[90]

Vogel occasionally cites authors who believe the Book of Mormon is an ancient work, but only to argue with them; his ideological commitments do not permit him to acknowledge sources that undermine his main point about the simplistic nature of the Mormon scripture.

Since 1991, when I wrote my essay about the abduction of the Lamanite girls, I have found other sources that support the idea that this story belongs to antiquity, not to Joseph Smith's world. Fawn Brodie is right that it requires that we look to ancient texts for comparisons although she is wrong about the significance of the story, for she asserts that it is evidence that Joseph Smith plagiarized the story from the Bible[91]—specifically from Judges 21. The story of the abduction, rape, and marriage of the daughters of Shiloh from Judges belongs to a complex of stories in the eastern Levant about abduction marriage. What neither Brodie nor Vogel mentions is that a Roman story in Plutarch (and Livy, for that matter) about the early Romans abducting the daughters of the Sabines represents the wives/daughters reconciling their fathers and husbands in much the same way the

90. Quinn, introduction to *New Mormon History,* xiii n. 5. I think Quinn's sharp dichotomy is too rigid and harsh, although it helps focus the mind on what ideologues/apologists such as Vogel neglect. The volume of scholarship in any discipline today is so large that to dismiss someone as either dishonest or incompetent for missing a single source (a person's metaphysical or ideological commitments help determine which sources are relevant, so the concept of relevance is not value-free) is too simple, especially when a reading of the Book of Mormon calls for a reader to be competent in historiography, biblical criticism, literary criticism, and philosophy. But I think we could reasonably expect Vogel to have engaged counterreadings that provide alternatives to his own position.

91. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet,* 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1971), 63.

Lamanite daughters do and is a much better parallel than anything offered by the two Joseph Smith biographers.

Stories from the ancient Mediterranean world about the abduction of girls are so common that a critical mass of studies has now been published on the motif. These abduction-to-force-marriage themes are common in Hebraic, Greek, and Roman writings (they continue into medieval Europe also). This common abduction type-scene permits Helena Zlotnick to posit that the standard form of giving a nubile maiden in marriage was through dowry and negotiation, but abduction marriage represents an alternative strategy for grooms and their families.[92] "More often than not, however, an abduction led to marriage and reconciliation."[93] Zlotnick focuses on the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 more than on the abduction of the daughters of Shiloh, but she does fit the Shiloh story into her reading.

After listing a range of Greco-Roman stories containing the abduction-marriage motif,[94] Susan Ackerman highlights the common features between the biblical and Greek stories: (1) the abducted maidens are participating in cultic dancing, (2) the girls' youth is emphasized, (3) the ambush has "an element of prurience,"[95] of older men's erotic gaze at girls, (4) the kidnapping violates the normal processes of conveying a girl from father to husband, and (5) the girls dance in a liminal space on the boundary between city and wilderness, culture and nature.[96] The Book of Mormon story includes these characteristic Mediterranean kidnapping elements: (1) the Lamanite girls gather to sing and dance at a particular place (Mosiah 20:1); (2) the girls are always referred to as the "daughters of the Lamanites" (Mosiah 20:1, 4–6) and only when the Amulonites are discovered later by the Lamanites does the terminology shift to include the title "wives" (Mosiah 23:33–34); (3) the wicked priests are older, already

92. Helena Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 34.

93. Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters,* 39–40.

94. Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 267–68.

95. Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen,* 269.

96. Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen,* 268–71.

having wives and children they have abandoned (Mosiah 20:3), and they "laid and watched" the dancing girls (Mosiah 20:4); (4) the theft violates the standard procedure of conveying girls to husbands, so the Lamanites attack the Zeniffites in the mistaken belief that they are the kidnappers (Mosiah 20:6), and later those daughters must intervene with their fathers so that the latter do not "destroy their husbands" when discovered (Mosiah 23:33–34); and (5) we cannot know much about the place the girls dance, but it is in the Lamanite land of Shemlon (Mosiah 20:1) where the priests of Amulon "tarried in the wilderness" (Mosiah 20:4). Shemlon was also the Lamanite land bordering the Zeniffite territory (Mosiah 10:7; 11:12; 19:6). The eastern Levantine stories of abduction marriage fit a pattern shared by the Israelite and Book of Mormon narratives. These connections should increase, not decrease, respect for the text. Only a superficial reading can have the opposite result.

Additionally, Vogel's comparison of Emma and Joseph's elopement to the abduction of the Lamanite girls makes no psychological sense. If Smith wrote this story, then he would be identifying himself subconsciously in Mosiah's narrative as a kidnapper and rapist. The priests of Amulon are not portrayed heroically, admirably, or even neutrally in the Book of Mormon story. Vogel sees Smith creating a lot of alter egos for himself in the Book of Mormon: Mormon (pp. 118, 326–28), Nephi (pp. 132, 134–35), Mosiah (p. 166), Andrew Jackson/Captain Moroni (p. 249), and Samuel the Lamanite (p. 284). In all these instances, Vogel projects these figures as Smith's alter egos *because* they are portrayed heroically, as a kind of fantasy fulfillment for a young Joseph Smith. So this identification of the priests of Noah as stand-ins for Smith would go against the grain of even Vogel's own interpretive principles. These kidnappers are scoundrels who abandon their original wives and children to abduct new wives and start a new life. Later they align themselves with the Lamanites to oppress and enslave a group of Nephites.

The book of Judges frames the three stories of violence (which are usually against women) at the conclusion of the book (Judges 19–21) with the claim that there was no king in the land (Judges 19:1) and

that, consequently, each man "did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The Mosiah narrative of abduction marriage alludes to the Judges abduction marriage story to make the point that even with a king in the land (Noah—and these priests are called the priests of Noah) each man still often does what is right in his own eyes (unless the people reject wicked kings such as Noah); Noah and his priests brought the people into slavery (Mosiah 23:12), and overthrowing a king is so difficult because "he has his friends in iniquity" (Mosiah 29:22). The Mosiah stories continue a complex discussion of leadership inherited from the Bible. Vogel's reading of the text is so elliptical that it does not develop the consequences of its position. His reading is stunted by its own ideological imperatives.

Vogel's story of Emma and Joseph's elopement does not involve an abduction, does not have nubile maidens group dancing in a liminal area to celebrate a cultic rite, does not have older men watching pruriently (Joseph was younger than Emma, and Emma was of adult age), does not have outraged fathers and brothers vowing to kill the abductors, does not have daughters pleading for their husband's/abductor's lives, does not have the details that connect the Book of Mormon story to Old World antecedents. Vogel's parallel is superficial, avoiding any descent into particulars.

The Foreigner at the Well Type-Scene

Vogel's scheme also uses Joseph and Emma's elopement as a parallel for another story, the narrative of Ammon's missionary journey to the Lamanites in which King Lamoni offers his daughter in marriage to the Nephite. (I have also published a reading of that story.)[97] Here is Vogel's take on this story: After entering Lamoni's domain, Ammon is taken captive and

> ingratiates himself to the king to the point that Lamoni offers him his own daughter in marriage. Ammon refuses. This scene has prompted Robert Anderson to suggest that Lamoni

97. Alan Goff, "Reduction and Enlargement: Harold Bloom's Mormons," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 96–108.

> represents Isaac Hale and that the offer of his daughter's hand is a reversal of the humiliation Joseph felt during his and Emma's elopement. Indeed, the setting of Ammon in a distant wilderness far from home suggests the Pennsylvania frontier, and various elements attached to King Lamoni—his power over Ammon, the offer of marriage, and his location in the land of Ishmael, which recalls the image of Nephi's father-in-law as previously described—suggest Isaac Hale. However, other elements, especially the dynamics between the king, queen, and Ammon, seem more reflective of Smith's own family. Lamoni is likely a composite of Isaac Hale and Joseph Smith Sr. (p. 222)

Caveat lector when journalists and biographers begin talking about composite characters; it means they are using fictionalizing techniques of synthesis because they cannot find a historical person to do the necessary work. Vogel then proceeds to summarize Ammon's encounter as a shepherd with the bandits who attempt to steal the flocks from the waters of Sebus, speculating whether they represent "adolescent games and fantasies" as Ammon defends the flocks with sword and sling (p. 222).

Again, Brodie has better readerly instincts about the interpretation of this narrative, for she—once more—speculates that Smith stole it from the story of David and Goliath.[98] To deal with this story adequately, one needs to compare it to biblical narrative, not Joseph Smith's life. True enough, Ammon is in a distant land (although Vogel seems to believe that the adjoining states of Pennsylvania and New York are foreign countries) and there are marriage implications; that is as much similarity as Vogel finds between the stories.

Robert Alter has shown that the primary feature of biblical narrative is its constant allusiveness.[99] The Book of Mormon—as Hebraic literature—likewise assumes that the reader will be able to make the connection between its own stories and the biblical stories it takes for

98. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 63.
99. Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: BasicBooks, 1992), 51.

granted. The Bible is full of type-scenes, stories whose basic motif is repeated with variations in other passages, sometimes in imitation, sometimes in opposition, sometimes in parody, and always to ensure that we compare the characters to each other to obtain the sense. The meaning of the particular type-scene is to be discerned through the resort to tradition and innovation in that type-scene. The story of Ammon's meeting Lamoni and confronting the thieves at the waters of Sebus belongs to that biblical textuality; more allusion to biblical Davidic stories is going on in the Ammon narrative. I will present the streamlined version here. Notice how viewing the story as a type-scene accounts for details in the narrative in a way that Vogel's generality does not even approach.

Alter refers to "a betrothal type-scene," and others call this repetitive pattern "the wooing at the well type-scene." He lists five elements of the motif: (1) the groom or his substitute is in a foreign land, (2) he comes across a nubile maiden, (3) one of them draws water, (4) the maiden rushes home announcing the arrival, and (5) the groom is invited in for a meal and marriage negotiations.[100] Moses's betrothal at the well is the simplest and most explicit betrothal scene (Exodus 2). Moses, (1) fleeing from Pharaoh, is in the foreign land of Midian; (2) he approaches the well used by Reuel (also known as Jethro) as Reuel's daughters herd their sheep there. Rogue shepherds drive away the girls' sheep; (3) Moses confronts the shepherds, then helps to draw water; (4) the girls tell their father about the stranger; and (5) Moses is welcomed to the household, later marrying Zipporah.

Another version of the type-scene has Jacob fleeing from his brother (Genesis 29). When he is (1) traveling as a stranger in Haran, (2) he sees Rachel at the well herding sheep, and (3) he helps water the sheep. (4) Rachel tells her father Laban, and (5) Jacob and Laban negotiate a marriage (eventually two marriages). Others of these type-scenes abound in Genesis and the books of Samuel.

Here is the fit with the Ammon type-scene in the Book of Mormon. Ammon (1) preaches in a foreign land and is bound before King Lamoni. Lamoni, pleased with Ammon, (5) offers a marriage to

100. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: BasicBooks, 1981), 52.

his (2) nubile daughter (Alma 17:24). Ammon declines and instead serves as a shepherd. The story lacks a well, but there is (3) a watering hole for the sheep, the waters of Sebus (Alma 17:26) where the flocks are scattered by thieves. As Moses resists the shepherds at a well, Ammon saves the sheep. With sword and sling Ammon defends the sheep, and the other servants run to the king with (4) news and testimony of Ammon's mighty deeds (Alma 17:39).

Vogel's interpretation of this story is so ideologically focused on finding some obscure and general parallel to Joseph Smith's life that he does not elucidate the details within the story. His reading is rudimentary, and he never ventures to point the reader to rival readings that might provide more satisfaction.

Abinadi's Disguise Fools Vogel

Another passage Vogel reads cursorily regards the prophet Abinadi.[101] He begins by comparing the slavery experienced by the Book of Mormon people of Limhi to Smith's discomfort at living in Harmony on land owned by his father-in-law:

> The story of Limhi's people subtlety parallels Joseph Smith's situation in Harmony. After their marriage, Joseph and Emma lived briefly in Manchester, but Emma longed to return to Harmony. When Joseph and Emma moved there, they settled on land owned by her father, Isaac, who was not sympathetic to Joseph. Isaac nevertheless offered to help them get established. Initially, Emma was happy in her homeland, and Joseph probably believed that living in Harmony was preferable to the conditions he had left behind in Manchester. Yet, there were unsettling aspects to living on land owned by an opponent, not the least of which was Hale's threat to have Smith evicted. Cowdery arrived with means to remove the

101. Again, I have provided a published reading about Abinadi's confrontation with King Noah to which Vogel could have referred, but Vogel, as what Quinn calls a "dishonest apologist" or an incompetent researcher, does not. Alan Goff, "Uncritical Theory and Thin Description: The Resistance to History," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 170–207.

> threat, but persecution would eventually drive Smith away. The lesson to Emma was that it was better living in freedom in a foreign land than in bondage in one's homeland. (p. 167)

Again, New York and Pennsylvania are foreign lands. The parallels here, like the last few examples, are too general and extended to be useful. For Vogel, literal slavery is literarily comparable to being a renter with a disagreeable landlord. When this narrative was written, some of the corresponding events (persecution in Harmony and South Bainbridge) had not even happened yet. These are parallels stretched beyond their plasticity. Vogel extends the parallelomania by writing that Smith's insecure relationship with Isaac Hale is allegorically like Zeniff's/Noah's/Limhi's living at a disadvantage or even in slavery to the Lamanites: This "must have seemed like servitude and bondage to Smith. Nevertheless, father-in-law and son-in-law reached an uncomfortable truce that allowed Smith to work on his Book of Mormon" (p. 176). Going beyond the realm of evidence, Vogel speculates that King Noah "may be a composite of people Joseph knew" (p. 177). Again, composite characterization is a feature of Vogel's fictive narrative. For Vogel, the wealth of Noah is reminiscent not only of Isaac Hale but also of the drinking of Smith's own father and of the king's vineyard of the biblical Noah. Noncredible comparisons are not beyond the range of guesswork for Vogel: "Just how complete or exaggerated the image of King Noah is as applied to Joseph Sr. remains speculative. Certainly, Joseph Sr.'s excessive drinking was a matter of public record and his repeated attempts to become wealthy were apparent to all familiar with his story" (p. 177). But these are pretty thin foundations for a literary comparison. Vogel continues his speculation on pages 178–79, where indicators of wild guesswork occur fifteen times on page 178 alone with another seven on page 179 ("could allude," "perhaps indicating," "there is no direct evidence," "may have," "provides a clue," "perhaps," "may be exaggerated," "may have been," "might have included," "maybe he similarly," "if," "would have felt," "perhaps," "a brief glimpse," "provides just a hint," "certainly," "would have regarded," "may have alluded," "undoubtedly," "in any

case," "may reflect," and "in other words"). Such speculation is all too representative of this book.

Vogel then gets down to the serious work of textual eisegesis. Abinadi cries repentance to Noah's people.

> Following God's command, Abinadi prophesies destruction upon King Noah and his people unless they "repent in sackcloth and ashes" (11:25; cf. Matt. 11:21). The prophet's message angers Noah, who commands his men to bring him "hither, that I may slay him" (v. 28). Abinadi escapes into the forest, from where, two years later, he emerges from seclusion dressed in a disguise and resumes prophesying. This time he is captured and brought in bonds before Noah and his priests to be interrogated concerning his teachings.
>
> Smith returned to Harmony after having been away for two years, and this time he came in a prophet's mantel. Residents of the small rural community rejected him for the same reason, in part, that caused Abinadi's martyrdom, which was because he taught that "Christ was the God, the Father of all things . . . and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood" (7:26–27), as previously stated by King Benjamin (3:5–10). (pp. 178–79)

For one thing, Vogel is so misled by his tendency to see parallels between the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's life that he fudges on this one. Joseph Smith was never away from Harmony for a two-year period from the time he first arrived until his ultimate departure to finish translating the book at the Whitmer home. Here is the timeline: Smith first goes to the Harmony/South Bainbridge area in October 1825 to work for Josiah Stowell, splitting most of 1826 between Harmony and South Bainbridge/Colesville; Joseph and Emma elope on 18 January 1827 and leave Harmony. In August 1827, Joseph and Emma return to Harmony to retrieve her property just four months before Joseph returns with the plates in December 1827 to begin translating the Book of Mormon.

Here is Vogel's claim again: "Smith returned to Harmony after having been away for two years, and this time he came in a prophet's mantel."[102] Vogel has to get the chronology wrong in order to make the parallel match Abinadi's two years, just as Fawn Brodie has to misrepresent the Book of Mormon to acquire one of her parallels. Asserting an unusual similarity between Lehi's family and Joseph Smith's, Brodie claims that even the order of sons is the same: "Like Joseph himself, Nephi had two elder brothers, Laman and Lemuel, and three younger, Sam, Jacob, and Joseph."[103] But this order misrepresents Sam's place in the family to make the birth order comparable, for the Book of Mormon, the only source available, declares (twice, in 1 Nephi 2:5 and in the introduction to the book of 1 Nephi) that Sam is older than Nephi. Turning back from Brodie's to Vogel's mistake, if you count backward two years, or twenty-four months, from the time Smith returned with the gold plates, that takes you back to a few months after Joseph Smith first arrived in the Harmony area. Joseph Smith did not return after being away for two years, as Abinadi did. Smith had been away from Harmony for four months and had only eloped—and therefore changed residence from Harmony to the Manchester area—ten months earlier. When Vogel needs a parallel between the Book of Mormon narrative and Joseph Smith's life, he is not above making things up that are contrary to the historical record.[104]

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102. A *mantel* is, by the way, a home furnishing attached to the fireplace. A *mantle* is a piece of clothing often associated with an office or position. Vogel may be confusing Joseph Smith (or Abinadi—if I may indulge in riotous Vogelian-type speculation—who might have worn Nephite home furnishings as a disguise), who symbolically wore a piece of clothing, with Jeremiah who did not wear part of a fireplace as an accoutrement but did wear "bonds and yokes" around his neck (Jeremiah 27:2–7) as a symbolic act prophesying the bondage Israelites would soon experience. Although typos and misspellings are inevitable in any book, Vogel's has an unusually high number of such grammatical and spelling mistakes, indicating sloppy compositional and editorial work. For example, Vogel perversely misspells the word *subtly* as s-u-b-t-l-e-l-y (p. 182) or s-u-b-t-l-e-t-y (p. 167). While spelling was not regularized by the early nineteenth century, it has been today. In addition to numerous misspellings, Vogel doesn't understand that subjunctive verb forms should be used in hypothetical claims (the bulk of Vogel's book) or statements contrary to fact (pp. 514 and 256, for example).

103. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 43.

104. When I read Vogel's biography, I read the introduction first and then skipped to chapter 12 about Abinadi's confrontation with Noah because I had written in the past

A more adequate reading of the Abinadi/Noah confrontation needs to be made. Vogel's interpretation minimizes the text when his version is not just plain wrong. Let me pick up on a detail Vogel mentions but does not even bother to explain. Abinadi's disguise is the interpretive key to this narrative. The Bible has a series of stories that contain the following elements: (1) a confrontation between a prophet and a king, (2) a disguise that is ineffective or is immediately dropped, and (3) a condemnation of the king. The type-scene appears often enough with those particulars that "we may suppose that a theological point is being made here."[105] Table 1 charts the occurrences of this biblical type-scene as Richard Coggins reads the text.

Notice that the Abinadi story has the same elements, worked into a different story. Just as the Bible makes a point by the repetition of the type-scene, the Book of Mormon does also. The Book of Mormon is much more complex than Vogel's readings would suggest. His readings are superficial because his ideology requires superficiality. He mentions the disguise detail but misses its importance, which is to attune the reader to the text and its version of textuality—to remember the biblical stories of prophets, kings, and disguises. Coggins's analysis of the disguise type-scene fits the Abinadi/Noah story as well as it fits any biblical narrative. The Abinadi story uses the word *disguise* to get the reader reflecting on the discussion of kingship that the Deuteronomistic history carries on with its stories of kings, prophets, and disguises.

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about that narrative. My mind was "thin slicing" this chronology, as Malcolm Gladwell calls it in *Blink*. Something just seemed wrong to me. I compared the chronology to J. Christopher Conkling's *A Joseph Smith Chronology* and found the problem, then looked up the details in a half dozen other Joseph Smith biographies. If you read Vogel's chapter 6 and keep track of the chronology there, you will see that he gets the dates correct and disproves his own assertion about Smith's being absent for two years. It is only when he makes the comparison to Abinadi that he distorts the time period. This was the first and only passage from Vogel's book that I spent any substantial time fact checking, and this one happened to be wrong—and ideologically wrong at that.

105. Richard Coggins, "On Kings and Disguises," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 50 (1991): 55.

Table 1. Type-scene features in biblical stories about disguise

	Disguised Saul and Witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28)	Unnamed Disguised Prophet and Ahab (1 Kg. 20)	Disguised King of Israel and King of Judah against Syria (1 Kg. 22)	King Josiah's Disguise (2 Chr. 35:20–24)	King Jeroboam, His Disguised Wife, and Ahijah (1 Kg. 14)
A disguise	Saul disguises himself to get the woman to conjure Samuel's spirit	The prophet demands to be assaulted and dons ashes as a disguise	Jehoshaphat wears kingly robes while Ahab is disguised	King Josiah disguises himself to fight the Egyptians	Jeroboam sends his wife disguised to Ahijah to supplicate for a sick son
The disguise promptly dropped or is ineffective	The woman sees through King Saul's disguise	The prophet drops the disguise after Ahab passes judgment	The Syrians told to engage only the king, but Ahab dies despite disguise	Josiah dies despite the disguise	The blind prophet perceives the real identity despite blindness and disguise
Conflict between prophet and king	Samuel criticizes Saul, whom the Lord has abandoned	Ahab should have killed Ben Hadad instead of releasing him	Ahab assaults and imprisons Micaiah for pessimistic prophecy	No conflict is evident	Ahijah criticizes Jeroboam for departing from commandments
Condemnation of the king	Saul will die that day in battle along with his sons	For releasing the rival king, Ahab himself will die	400 prophets in Ahab's employ predict victory; only Micaiah predicts death	Josiah is not condemned	Jeroboam condemned for idolatry and the son will die

Off with Their Heads

Another motif from the ancient world that Vogel handles incompetently is the theme of a dancing lover followed by a decapitation. Vogel follows Brodie in a simplistic analysis of this story: "Many stories he borrowed from the Bible. The daughter of Jared, like Salome, danced before a king and a decapitation followed."[106] Without acknowledging Brodie's antecedent claim, Vogel writes about this story in the book of Ether: "Like Salome who danced for the head of John the Baptist, Jared's daughter dances before Akish (8:10–12; cf. Matt. 14:6–12)" (p. 350).[107] Here is the larger context of Brodie's charge that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Bible: "Many stories [Joseph Smith] borrowed from the Bible. The daughter of Jared, like Salome, danced before a king and a decapitation followed. Aminadi, like Daniel, deciphered handwriting on a wall, and Alma was converted after the exact fashion of St. Paul. The daughters of the Lamanites were abducted like the dancing daughters of Shiloh; and Ammon, the American counterpart of David, for want of a Goliath slew six sheep-rustlers with his sling." This passage, where Brodie accuses Smith of pilfering in composing the Book of Mormon, must be the most commonly plagiarized passage from Brodie's book. Here Wayne Ham lifts from Brodie (without attribution) as he accuses Smith of plagiarizing from the Bible:

> Other apparent biblical allusions in the **Book of Mormon** include Alma's conversion in a similar fashion to Paul's; Ammon, like David, slaying six sheep rustlers with a sling; the daughter of Jared, like Salome, dancing for the king in return

106. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 62–63.

107. Similarly, Vogel does not acknowledge part of this Brodie passage when suggesting another story Smith took from the Bible: the sons of Mosiah and Alma disrupt the church, and "their conversion story is patterned after that of Paul in Acts 9:1–31" (p. 196); again, Vogel does not cite Brodie where Brodie says, "Alma was converted after the exact fashion of St. Paul." Brodie notes one other passage that she considers a plagiarism that the Book of Mormon pilfers from the Bible: "Aminadi, like Daniel, deciphered handwriting on a wall" (Brodie, *No Man Know My History,* 63), when Vogel asserts the following: "Among Amulek's ancestors was Aminadi, who like Daniel in the Old Testament 'interpreted the writing upon the wall of the temple, which was written by the finger of God' (v. 2; Dan. 5)" (p. 210).

> for a decapitation; Jesus' blessing of the children; and an abduction scene similar to that involving the daughters of Shiloh.[108]

In this article, Ham explicitly raises the context of students plagiarizing in a class: "All of this may raise the same kind of question as might appear in a teacher's mind when one student's project shows a marked resemblance to a project submitted previously by another student. To what extent was the author (or editor, or compiler) of the *Book of Mormon* dependent upon the King James Version, and why?"[109]

Similarly, even though evangelical author Ruth Tucker cites Brodie as her source, Tucker also plagiarizes the passage from the Joseph Smith biographer because she cites the passage verbatim (inserting an introductory phrase) without including quotation marks.[110] This material from Fawn Brodie shows up many times in anti-Mormon books and Web pages. Like Ham's copying, a Web page (entitled without any apparent irony "Honest Inquiry") appropriates Brodie without citation: the "daughter of Jared danced before the king (Ether 8) like the daughter of Herodias (Matthew 14) (decapitation followed in both cases)."[111] Acknowledging sources on the Internet is subject to different rules, but these examples clearly fall outside acceptable behavior. Other parts of Brodie's paragraph also show up in this vicinity under the heading "Why do so many stories seem like exaggerated borrowings from the Bible?" Failure of originality often accompanies failure to acknowledge literary theft (while at the same time the critics are accusing the Book of Mormon of theft).[112] There is some irony that Brodie's simplistic charges of plagiarism are so often plagiarized in books and on the Internet (one can easily find more sites, such as the one that claims

108. Wayne Ham, "Problems in Interpreting the Book of Mormon as History," *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action* 1/1 (September 1970): 22 n. 8, emphasis in original.

109. Ham, "Problems in Interpreting the Book of Mormon as History," 19.

110. Ruth A. Tucker, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 55. I have taken the subtitle from the title page, which differs slightly from the dustcover.

111. See www.lds-mormon.com/bookofmormonquestions.shtml#BOM8 (accessed 16 December 2005).

112. You can also find the same material at www.bible.ca/mor-questions.htm (accessed 16 December 2005).

that Akish's daughter's dancing is copied from the Bible while lifting the idea from Brodie).[113] The modern notion of plagiarism is alien to the ancient world, but it is clearly applicable to writers today.

The story of a woman (although sometimes a homosexual lover) who, after drinking and dancing, asks for a prisoner's decapitation is such a common theme in Hebraic, Greek, and Roman texts that its ubiquity needs to be addressed; Vogel needs to deal with this ancient theme rather than just implying that Smith took it from the Bible (or he must address Smith's gift in knowing just which ancient themes to exploit as he wrote his novel). This story motif doesn't start with the Herodias-Salome iteration, but the bloody and distinctive elements of the story go back before the Christian period.[114] Zagona cites the story of Flaminius in Cicero and Plutarch. Those who fault the Book of Mormon for not being original ought to recognize that the New Testament story that Vogel thinks is the original for the decollation story itself is not original (Emerson insisted that the originals are not original):

> The two versions reflect similar tropes: both men were killed to satisfy a need of the ruler to please a young figure of desire. The order of death is not related to any actual crime by the victim. While the biblical text does not indicate that Salomé and Herod had any sort of sexual involvement, he accedes to her wish because she has pleased him and he wishes to please her. In the classical story the consul Flaminius wants to please his lover. Pleasure in both cases overrules justice. Similarly each sexual story overwrites the political one.[115]

Herodotus contains a similar story.[116] In fact, J. Duncan Derrett asserts the most improbable elements of the Salome story are paralleled in

113. See www.helpingmormons.org/Parallels.htm (accessed 16 December 2005), and www.2think.org/hundredsheep/bom/matthew.shtml (accessed 16 December 2005).

114. Helen G. Zagona, *The Legend of Salome and the Principle of Art for Art's Sake* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), 14–15.

115. Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 214–15.

116. Herodotus, *The Histories,* trans. A. D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 4:285–93.

Herodotus and Athenaeus: a princess's provocative dance, a promise of half the kingdom.[117] I have read Athenaeus a number of times (save me from the ordeal of reading that much about Roman gastronomy again) for the intertext, though, and I do not find a story there I would call parallel. The stories of Esther and John the Baptist are similar to Herodotus's Xerxes. In Herodotus the theme is part of a complex of stories about the vengeful queen. This motif is important for understanding the *Histories* as a whole.[118]

The Salome story shows clear dependence not on the Old Testament book of Esther but on rabbinic midrashim of Esther:

> A ruler's similarly foolish promise is found in the book of Esther, where besotted king Ahasuerus, at a banquet, promises the young Queen Esther, also termed *korasion* in the LXX, the apple of his eye, that she may have anything she desires up to half his kingdom. Both stories involve women manipulating men through wining, dining, and gazing at delicious feminine beauty. Each of the all-powerful kings ends up ordering a man killed although he may not truly want to execute the man. Each ruler violates legal authority with impunity because each has had his mind "poisoned" by desiring a very tasty female dish.[119]

In the midrashic narratives Vashti loses her head for not dancing before the king's party. Esther then replaces Vashti as queen. Roger Aus notes ten broad similarities between the Esther midrashim and John's death in Mark 6:17–29. "Cumulatively, however, they simply provide too many exact word and motif similarities for the latter to be dismissed as mere 'reminiscences' of the former."[120]

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117. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Herod's Oath and the Baptist's Head," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 9 (1965): 49.

118. Stewart Flory, *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 42.

119. Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal,* 231.

120. Roger Aus, *Water into Wine and the Beheading of John the Baptist: Early Jewish-Christian Interpretation of Esther 1 in John 2:1–11 and Mark 6:19–29* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 67.

The reader's responsibility in reading Book of Mormon narrative is much deeper than Brodie, Ham, and Vogel recognize. "The antiquity, depth, complexity, and diverse aspects of the Herodias, Salome, and John stories were only gradually discovered in the course of the nineteenth century by scholars of folklore, religion, and anthropology. Their studies disclose the pre-Christian roots of the biblical story."[121] While one could ask for but hardly expect Vogel to have read these relevant sources, he might at least have referred to Hugh Nibley's brief comments on the antiquity of the Salome theme.[122] Vogel's textual analysis does not show any awareness of the repetitive nature of this theme in ancient Mediterranean cultures.

Nephi's Fraternal Conflict and Manufactured Smith Fraternal Conflict

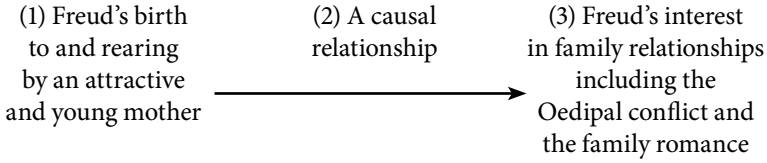
One might wonder where the boundary is between an appropriate amount of speculation in history (some educated guesswork or product of the imagination, it seems to me, is necessary in writing both history and biography) and the unacceptably speculative. Let us say I were writing a biography of Freud. Hypothetically we have an event that the biographer thinks is causal—Sigmund Freud was born to Jacob and Amalia Freud (Jacob's third wife) in 1856. Amalia was twenty years younger than her husband, and Sigmund's half-brother Emmanuel was actually older than Amalia. So when faced with Freud's family circumstances and a later one—Freud's evolving interest in family relationships including the family romance[123] and the Oedipus complex—a historian might posit three things: (1) an initial event (Freud's being raised by a young and attractive mother and a much older father), (3) an effect (Freud's explanation that a male child wants to wrest the mother's affection from a father the son competes with even to the point of patricide), and (2) a

121. Ewa Kuryluk, *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex: The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 201.

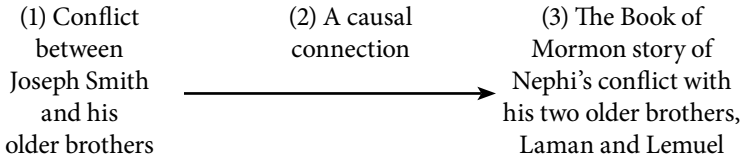
122. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 210–13.

123. The family romance is Freud's explanation that the child imagines a different—usually more affluent or stylish—family than he or she actually has by positing or fantasizing about adoption, abandonment, or similar arrangements.

causal connection between the two. The historical conclusion might be diagrammed like this:



Stannard would view even this fairly tame connection as an example of a logical fallacy—the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy that assumes a causal connection between two events when that connection might be coincidental. Let's take Vogel's unacceptably speculative explanation of fraternal conflict in the Book of Mormon. Vogel posits that the story of conflict between Nephi and his older brothers must emerge out of Joseph Smith's life experience, so there must have been conflict between him and his older brothers to motivate such a story's emergence in the Book of Mormon:



The problem with this historical explanation is that, unlike the Sigmund Freud biography where points 1 and 3 are matters of historical record and the psychohistorian must supply only the reasonable causal connection, Vogel has only one of the three elements. He must use his imagination and his ideology to fabricate points 1 and 2. When the biographer must invent two of the three elements, the probability of the comparison's being hijacked by ideological concerns is too great—and that potential abuse becomes a reality in Vogel's book. Because the consequent must have happened, according to Brodie and Vogel, surely there must be some antecedent event that caused the Book of Mormon stories of sibling rivalry. Vogel is affirming the consequent at the same time he is making a questionable logical connection to an unattested event.

Both Vogel (p. 575 n. 60) and Brodie[124] admit that no historical evidence exists supporting the alleged murderous rage between Smith brothers. Both psychobiographers (at least, Brodie was a psychobiographer by the time she wrote the supplement to her book on Joseph Smith) go about inventing the parallel episode. Vogel follows Brodie when she says that the Book of Mormon provides evidence of Smith's "inner conflicts. Like any first novel, it can be read to a limited degree as autobiography. It contains clues to his conflict with members of his own family," especially his own brothers;[125] in other words, it provides clues to events for which Brodie has no evidence. The Book of Mormon fratricidal conflict "is remarkably suggestive of what may have been a similar conflict within Joseph Smith's own family over his veracity."[126] Like Vogel, Brodie admits the total lack of evidence for this fraternal conflict:

> We do not know if Joseph Smith as a young boy was treated harshly by his older brothers. Lucy Smith tells us that when he was fourteen, "a gun was fired across his pathway, with the evident intention of shooting him." The ball lodged in the neck of a cow, but the mystery of who fired the gun was never solved. Since the shooting happened at the door of his own home, one cannot help wondering if young Joseph thenceforth harbored unconscious or even conscious fantasies about the would-be murderer being one of his own brothers.[127]

It is irresponsible to invent events simply because your ideology requires them. Even Freud—and Stannard calls him irresponsible in fabricating evidence—refers to an event involving da Vinci's sexuality that he connects to childhood experiences; Freud at least starts from scribblings in da Vinci's notebooks that discuss a childhood dream about a bird. (Freud misinterprets the type of bird, and his entire analysis depends on that mistranslation.) It would take a gullible reader to

124. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 414.
125. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 413.
126. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 414.
127. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 414.

accept Brodie's intense guessing of people's thoughts. She continues, being even more specific about her own stand-in for Laman:

> Alvin died only about a month after Joseph Smith told his family of the initial discovery of the golden plates, just at the time, one would guess, that the plot of the Book of Mormon was being constructed in Joseph Smith's fantasies. The constantly recurring theme in the book of brothers killing brothers would thus seem to be more than mere coincidence. Literary fantasy is an ancient therapeutic device, used by countless authors who have no understanding of how or why it brings some surcease to inner turmoil.[128]

Both Vogel and Brodie venture onto fictive ground as they fabricate this supposed conflict between Joseph Smith and his brothers. I am not aware of any Smith brothers killing each other or even attempting to, and neither are Brodie and Vogel.

Just as Brodie must misrepresent the Book of Mormon in order to get Lehi's sons and birth order to match Joseph Smith Sr.'s sons and birth order, Vogel must do major juggling of Smith children to get the right result:

> The parallels to the Smith family are not seen as much in direct representations as in more subtle emotional profiles. Joseph's older and younger brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, are much like Laman and Lemuel to the extent that, in Joseph's emotional language they "rebelled" against the authority of Joseph Sr.'s dreams and joined the Presbyterian church—even though in the Book of Mormon story both Laman and Lemuel are older than Nephi. One might see Joseph's two older siblings, Hyrum and Sophronia, in the same light, the latter having also joined the Presbyterian church. Nephi and Joseph occupy the fourth position among their siblings in their respective families, although again somewhat differently. Nephi was the fourth of Lehi's sons, but nothing is

128. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 415.

> said concerning the ordering of his sisters (2 Ne. 5:6). Joseph was the fourth of Joseph Sr.'s sons only if one includes the unnamed infant who died before Alvin's birth. At the same time, Joseph was the fourth of the living Smith children. One important difference exists in that Alvin died before the family became fractured. Regardless, Joseph's decision to write about a family that was seriously divided over the meaning of its patriarch's dreams is significant. (pp. 131–32)

So we now come to the point where attempting fratricide is parallel to joining the Presbyterians; one wonders what the parallel would be if Hyrum were to join a group of radicals such as the Baptists. See how easy it is to get the right number of children and birth order? You can include or exclude sisters, you can count or ignore (as Brodie does) children who die in infancy. You can count Alvin or discount him if he dies young. Brodie, at least, when she posits the necessity of strong conflict among the Smith brothers to account for the Nephi/Laman and Lemuel conflict, just leaves it at the uncontrolled speculation that the brothers fought. As you can see from this passage, Vogel is not satisfied with that explanation. He provides a reason for the presumed conflict even as he states that these parallels are not really parallels but "subtle emotional profiles" (p. 131). Joseph Smith Sr. had visions (which he did), which included the message that all churches on the earth were wrong (p. 8) and expressed disapproval of Lucy's participation in Methodist activities (p. 15). In about 1824, Lucy, Hyrum, Sophronia, and Samuel joined the Presbyterian church (p. 58). On pages saturated with conjecture, Vogel finds the cause of what he believes is the family conflict, and fraternal conflict, among the Smith family. "Religious discussion in the Smith household undoubtedly reached unprecedented intensity after Lucy, Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia joined the Palmyra Presbyterian church" (p. 62). The Presbyterian minister had asserted that Alvin—recently deceased and unbaptized—would go to hell. "Second, the authority of Joseph Sr.'s dreams and Joseph Jr.'s visions which, while not specifically stating that all churches were false, indicated that the entire religious world was spiritually moribund and under condemnation. When Lucy joined the Presbyterian

church, she ignored the import of these revelations" (pp. 62–63). This is the stuff of Vogel's Smith family conflict. Hyrum and Samuel (or perhaps Hyrum and Alvin or even Hyrum and Sophronia; Vogel hedges on the identification) were allegorically Laman and Lemuel because they joined the Presbyterian church. This is a thin argument based on conjecture built upon speculation. Laman and Lemuel attempted to murder Nephi several times because Hyrum and Samuel joined the Presbyterian church.

But Vogel admits that no evidence exists beyond his *post hoc* argumentation for such conflict. He simply sees parallels to this putative conflict in the Book of Mormon. When "Laman and Lemuel tie [Nephi] with cords," "one wonders if the attention to detail in Nephi's account draws from an actual event. William D. Morain has questioned Lucy's claim that young Joseph remained unrestrained during his surgery. Actually, Joseph had two operations on his leg and may have been tied up for only the first. Regardless, the repetition of Nephi being bound by his older siblings points to the significance the image had for Joseph" (p. 140). Vogel does not bother to explain the brothers' connection to his leg surgery. This is wild and unrestrained guesswork that Vogel takes for granted actually happened outside his own mind in the past, for he asserts that the "story of Nephi's rivalry with his brothers not only reflected the family dynamics of Joseph Smith's own circumstances but also functioned as a warning to accept the Book of Mormon" (p. 145). Vogel also finds this murderous intent from Smith's brothers in other Book of Mormon narratives. After Ammon kills the leader of the bandits at the waters of Sebus and lies unconscious on the floor, the brother of the bandit leader attempts to kill Ammon but is struck down: "This protection from an avenging brother perhaps reflects the fear Joseph once harbored concerning his own siblings following Alvin's death" (p. 225). You can see how the absence of historical evidence results in Vogel's irresponsible use of psychobabble and hunches to take him where his ideology leads.

For an example of psychobabble, think of an oral fixation that undergirds another parallel Vogel finds between Book of Mormon narrative and Smith's supposed conflict with his brothers, aggression

Vogel fabricates through presupposition and ideology that he later counts as established. When Mormon during wartime mentions to Moroni the depravity of both Lamanites and Nephites who rape and cannibalize, Vogel claims that these acts resemble atrocities in wars between European settlers and the Indians:

> On a deeper level, Mormon's words show how intense Smith's emotions over his own family situation were (Morm. 6–7). One is justified in seeking psychological meaning in Mormon's words, for they are laden with intense feeling and narrate the culmination of family strife that began with Nephi and his brothers. More poignantly, Mormon may point to the feared breakup of Smith's family, which Smith desperately wants to avert. The language can be seen as a symbolic, unconscious window to the soul. (p. 373)

Vogel shows no restraint in his imaginative desire to connect Book of Mormon episodes to Joseph Smith's life. But a lack of evidence ought to limit the fictive desire in a biography.

Unlike others who speculate along these lines, Vogel wants to exempt Joseph's older brother Alvin from the Laman identification, even though Vogel may at times refer to Nephi's being tied down by his older brothers (p. 140), implying that the same event happened to Joseph. For Vogel, Alvin is more like Jared in the book of Ether: "In contrast to Nephi and his brothers, Jared and his brother work in harmony and cooperation, suggesting the Smith family before the death of Alvin or an idealized family that is reunited in the millennium. Harmony is achieved largely because Jared submits to his brother's spiritual leadership, much as Alvin did for Joseph" (p. 343; Vogel criticizes Robert Anderson for equating Alvin with Laman, pp. 607–8 n. 2). My objection excludes Vogel at this point, but those who insist that the Book of Mormon is evidence of lethal discord between Joseph and his elder brothers should acknowledge not only that no documentary evidence exists for the quarrels (the psychological evidence is, needless to say, fragile at best) but that what historical evidence does exist undermines this claim. When Joseph Smith Jr. expressed his feel-

ings for Alvin, he spoke of Alvin's "zeal" and "kindness" toward him and the work of bringing forth the Book of Mormon.[129] Lucy spoke of Alvin's "singular goodness of disposition—kind and amiable,"[130] while Joseph, the one who supposedly feared being killed by Alvin and Hyrum, said the following about his eldest brother: "Alvin, my oldest brother—I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart when he died. He was the oldest and the noblest of my father's family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men. Shall his name not be recorded in this book? Yes, Alvin, let it be had here and be handed down upon these sacred pages for ever and ever. In him there was no guile. He lived without spot from the time he was a child. From the time of his birth he never knew mirth. He was candid and sober and never would play; and minded his father and mother in toiling all day."[131] Psychobiographers need to explain how living "without spot from the time he was a child" can be reconciled with suspicions of fraternal murder.

If Hyrum were the alleged Laman, then psychobiographers must deal with the claim that "Hyrum and Joseph were as close as any two brothers could be. 'I have been acquainted with him ever since he was born.'" Hyrum shared all his younger brother's deeds, words, and actions.[132] Joseph said of his brother Hyrum that the latter was "a natural brother; thought I to myself, brother Hyrum, what a faithful heart you have got."[133] After a Smith family argument with William, Hyrum talked things out with Joseph. Joseph wrote on this occasion that "I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved

129. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 65, citing Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (1853; repr., New York: Arno and the New York Times, 1969), 90.

130. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism,* 65, citing Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 89.

131. *History of the Church,* 5:126–27.

132. Jeffrey S. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 8. The internal quotation is from Hyrum himself. See testimony of Hyrum Smith before the Nauvoo municipal court, 1 July 1843, in *History of the Church,* 3:404.

133. *The Papers of Joseph Smith,* ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–), 2:416.

brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death, for I never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me, which he declared when he left me to-day."[134] Such statements are in sources very easy to access and are in obvious contradiction to Vogel's guesses. Vogel could have, and should have, at least raised them in relation to his own speculation.

Other people noticed the genuine love Joseph and Hyrum had for each other. William Taylor noted their affection when the two brothers were reunited: "'Never in all my life have I seen anything more beautiful than the striking example of brotherly love and devotion felt for each other by Joseph and Hyrum,' he observed. 'I witnessed this many, many times. No matter how often, or when or where they met, it was always with the same expression of supreme joy.'"[135] Does this sound like a relationship between brothers that, when they were younger, would have prompted suspicions of murder because of cruel treatment? Such explicit testimony represents truly historical evidence of what was in Joseph Smith's mind. It can be countered by means of *ad hoc* psychological concepts such as repression, but the explicit evidence argues against any notion that Joseph feared being killed by his older brothers, and those who say otherwise need to engage, rather than ignore, genuine historical evidence. The comments by family members and observers later in life show no traces of what Brodie, Vogel, and others require to be a murderous childhood relationship. One ought to be cautious about accepting speculation driven by the biographer's theory and without any historical grounding outside that theory. Vogel and Brodie invent evidence to buttress their ideological positions while suppressing evidence that explicitly contradicts them.

Explaining the Book of Mormon theme of fratricidal conflict can be done more economically than just concocting evidence that the historical record does not provide. A fundamental principle of biblical composition is stated in the rabbinic rule that "what happened to the fathers, happens to the sons." Robert Alter states it differently:

134. *History of the Church,* 2:338.
135. Cited in O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith,* 272.

"All that happened to the fathers was a sign for the sons" that events repeat themselves over generations: "In the Bible, however, the matrix for allusion is often a sense of absolute historical continuity and recurrence, or an assumption that earlier events and figures are timeless ideological models by which all that follows can be measured."[136] Vogel does not understand Book of Mormon textuality because he does not understand biblical textuality. He mentions the biblical stories of conflict between younger and older brothers, but only to suggest that Joseph Smith lifts that theme from the Bible in composing the Book of Mormon (p. 138). Again, Vogel reads the Book of Mormon far under its potential because he is ideologically committed to a simplistic Book of Mormon. The theme of the ascendance of the younger son is common in specific portions of the Bible. The Book of Mormon requires that its readers catch those allusions and read Laman and Lemuel versus Nephi against the biblical backdrop of younger brothers succeeding over older brothers: Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, the sons of Jacob and Joseph, the sons of Jesse and David, David's sons and Solomon, Manasseh and Ephraim.[137] The story is highlighted in the Book of Mormon because it emerges in the Bible: "The theme of the passed-over firstborn seems to have something to do with the insufficiency of the human desire for continuity which underlies the custom of passing the inheritance on to the eldest son. . . . The deliberate choice of a younger son represents a divine intervention in human affairs, a vertical descent into the continuity that breaks its pattern, but gives human life a new dimension by doing so."[138] God sometimes chooses weak tools to accomplish the work and is not locked in by traditions such as primogeniture. What happens to the fathers happens to the sons, and in Hebraic literature what happens to Jacob/Israel happens to his descendants just as what happens to the Lehites (who

136. Robert Alter, "Putting Together Biblical Narrative," in *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer,* ed. Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 121.

137. E. Fox, "Stalking the Younger Brother: Some Models for Understanding a Biblical Motif," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 60 (1993): 45–46.

138. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 182.

claim the biblical Joseph as their ancestor) repeats what happened to Joseph and the other sons of Jacob: "The fact that the Younger Brother motif is so fully played out precisely in the stories about the character who is himself named Israel, confirms its importance as a whole-people motif."[139] Other parts of the Bible have stories of siblings, but not often stories of brothers and sisters in discord. More specifically, stories of brothers in strife are organized around Jacob[140] and extend to his son Joseph. Vogel's superficial reading of the Book of Mormon motif should be expanded and deepened.

While Laman and Lemuel insist on primogeniture as the leadership is passed on from Lehi to his sons, the Book of Mormon (like the Bible) is concerned that God determine the next generation's rulers: "Most of the biblical stories are not concerned with the transmission of land, as ultimogeniture most commonly provides, but with the transfer of status, whether in the form of kingship or a father's blessing."[141] The reader should not mistakenly believe that because God chooses Nephi over Laman the younger son is inherently superior. God's choice is determined by some mysterious election or perhaps the righteousness of the characters: "Stories about heroes who narrowly escape death at the hands of those close to them—a father, brothers, or a father-figure [such as King Saul] are not triumphalist but rather salvific. They reflect not a period of intense pride in great national accomplishments, but rather one (or more) of outer and inner crisis—crises, which to be sure, are resolved by overt or covert divine intervention."[142]

I cannot develop the depth and complexity of this theme in the Bible or the Book of Mormon in this essay. I can only provide a flavor as an antidote to Vogel's superficial Book of Mormon eisegesis. The Book of Mormon assumes that the reader will catch the allusion to the biblical theme and realize that the motif of the younger son's success will illuminate the characters of Nephi and Laman: "Being favored with the blessing—a theological category rather than a legal one—

139. Fox, "Stalking the Younger Brother," 62.

140. Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 112.

141. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together,* 14.

142. Fox, "Stalking the Younger Brother," 63.

means being an ancestor of Israel, marking the line through which the people traced their descent and justifying the thread of the biblical account. Ultimately these tales are about which son (or daughter) will be followed by the continuing narrative. Essentially retrospective, they explain for later generations how God had determined those through whom *the* line would continue."[143] The textuality featured in the Bible occurs also in the Book of Mormon. If you believe Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, you must account for his sophisticated incorporation of such textuality into his book.

Joseph Smith, Dan Vogel, Book of Mormon Narrative, and Reading the Bible

The Book of Mormon text needs to be treated with far more respect than Vogel accords it. Vogel must add comic-strip psychoanalysis that invents fraternal conflict to support his impoverished readings. Vogel's readings turn the plenitude of scripture into poverty by using a reductive technique; although inventive and often imaginative, his Book of Mormon readings are reductive and overdetermined by his ideological concerns.

I could have selected many more examples of Vogel's underestimation of the Book of Mormon narrative. For instance, he refers to the story of Nephi's broken bow in 1 Nephi 16. "This event seems inspired by David's psalm in 2 Samuel 22:35, which poetically states: '[God] teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken in mine arms'" (p. 136). Vogel focuses on the issue of whether or not steel is an anachronism and, so, does little with the broken bow imagery. But he must account for the Book of Mormon's use of biblical symbolism in ways far outdistancing his own readings. As Nahum Waldman's essay shows, the broken bow was used in the Bible to symbolize submission or impotence[144] and was used extensively in vassal treaties. The bow itself was used to represent military power. If Joseph Smith wrote the

143. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together,* 56.

144. Nahum Waldman, "The Breaking of the Bow," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 69/2 (October 1978): 82.

Book of Mormon, Vogel still needs to explain how time after time he is inferior to Smith as a biblical exegete. He has at his disposal the enormous resources of contemporary biblical criticism, but he ignores those tools because his ideology insists on their irrelevance, and they would indeed have complicated his explanatory problems. Psalm 37:14–17 illustrates the bow and broken bow symbolism: "The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and *their bows shall be broken*. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For *the arms of the wicked shall be broken:* but the Lord upholdeth the righteous." The figure here is one of arrogance and domination. But, as the biblical trope demonstrates, the proud will be humbled. Before God will provide a way to fashion a new bow and to obtain food, Nephi and his group need to repent and demonstrate humility. Waldman explains that the bow was also a symbol of leadership; think of Jonathan turning over his symbols of rulership to David: bow, robe, garment, and sword (1 Samuel 18:4). If Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he came up with precisely the right biblical symbolism to apply to Nephi as he begins to assert his leadership; at the same time Laman's and Lemuel's bows lose their elasticity.

Vogel focuses on "poor grammar," "digression, redundancy, and wordiness" in the Book of Mormon; these, by the way, are also failings of Vogel's biography. For him, the characters are flat (and they are if you compare them to the tension in biblical characters or the best of modern novels); this one literary judgment by Vogel is adequate to the Book of Mormon. "Generally the plots are simple and frequently improbable. However, the point was not to produce a literary masterpiece" (p. 119). Here you can see the penury of Vogel's literary judgment. The Book of Mormon is indeed a literary masterpiece and it obtains its quality through repetition, allusion to biblical narrative, and internal allusion—the very elements Vogel finds faulty. I am not the only reader who has insisted on the complexity of Book of Mormon

narrative.[145] Vogel ignores this emerging consensus among competent literary critics that Book of Mormon narrative is refined and rewards the closest readings.

By ignoring readings that assert Book of Mormon sophistication, Vogel avoids a serious historical problem he had a responsibility to address. Even if you contend that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, you still must explain his genius in appropriating a biblical form of textuality. The Book of Mormon uses biblical texture and biblical themes in ways that require Smith to be vastly superior to Vogel as a reader. Vogel's inadequate readings indicate failure in the historical analysis. How did Joseph Smith know to use type-scenes and the very motifs Alter singles out as the best examples of this form of textuality from the Bible and to do it long before contemporary biblical and literary criticism discovered an appropriate way to theorize the material? Vogel reads down to the Book of Mormon, but such condescension is ironic considering the qualitative difference between Book of Mormon narrative and his readings of it. Vogel's biography devotes the bulk of its historical work to reading the Book of Mormon, yet his reading of this book of scripture is the most insistent and powerful weakness in his biographical work. Therefore, Vogel's book is vastly inferior to the book it attempts to explain.

Book of Mormon Passages Contradicting Vogel's Theory of Book of Mormon Composition

In a book as long as this biography, and in one that attempts to account for the whole range of Mormon scripture, Vogel could have paused on difficult passages that pose problems for his account of the book's origins. But he does not engage passages that challenge his

145. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1997); Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah;* Robert A. Rees, "Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance," *Dialogue* 35/3 (2002): 83–112. Vogel refers to Rust and Thomas, but only to mention the Book of Mormon's occasional lyricism (p. 605 n. 48), not to address their assertion about the book's complexity.

theory; he passes them over, preferring to stack the deck, suppressing counterexamples, ignoring the textual material that does not support his ideologically inspired reading.[146] The theory of composition assumes that there were no gold plates for Smith to translate from—he was just making things up as he went along. Smith produced the book of Lehi first, then that portion was lost by Martin Harris. When Smith recommenced, he started with Mosiah–Moroni, then later went back to compose 1 Nephi–Words of Mormon to fill in the early part of the book. Vogel and other revisionist authors claim that the more developed theological material is in the first two books of Nephi. For Vogel and these other writers, Smith's compositional sequence is demonstrated in the structure of the Book of Mormon, with more evolved portions (1 and 2 Nephi) being dictated last. Let me provide a few examples of what biblical critics sometimes call one-sided or one-way literary dependence—passages that give the reader some idea of which textual section was composed later because particular parts show awareness of other portions. Literary and biblical critics usually analyze such features under the heading of allusion or citation, but Vogel uses only the most elementary literary terminology or concepts as he reads what he considers Joseph Smith's novel.

According to Vogel's compositional theory,[147] the first Book of Mormon material Joseph Smith made up was Mosiah. But even the first chapter of Mosiah is already pointing back to narrative that Vogel believes Smith had not yet invented and for which he had no idea what the content was going to be: "Yet, when Smith begins to dictate the superscription to Nephi's book, he sketches the historical material but is vague about the religious content. There is no mention of

146. I have addressed these issues previously when I reviewed essays by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Susan Staker, and Edwin Firmage Jr., so some overlap between the points I make here and the ones I made there may occur. These three authors take up the same theory of composition expounded by Vogel in his biography of Joseph Smith. See Alan Goff, "Positivism and the Priority of Ideology in Mosiah-First Theories of Book of Mormon Production," *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 11–36.

147. I don't want to dismiss this compositional order. One can believe that the Book of Mormon is ancient and still believe that Joseph Smith started translating again with the book of Mosiah rather than with 1 Nephi. But Vogel's compositional theory depends on the scripture's being a novel invented by Joseph Smith.

Lehi's dream or Nephi's prophecies, both central elements in Nephi's account. While Nephi would have known what he was going to include in his book, Smith evidently did not know beforehand what he would be inspired to dictate" (p. 384). Smith did not know what was going to be in 1 Nephi when he started composing 1 Nephi (June 1829) (p. 407), let alone when he wrote Mosiah (starting in September 1828) (p. 148), according to Vogel's chronology. However, among other things, this argument manifests the logical fallacy called an appeal to silence; just because a text does not mention some idea or episode does not mean its author was unaware of that idea. (Until now, I have not mentioned string theories or coaxial cables, yet it would be a mistake to assume that I am completely unaware of them; or, to summarize a point Vogel makes elsewhere, to assume the Book of Mormon writer did not know about something is tricky because proving a negative is impossible.)

The principal weakness in Vogel's book is his textual analysis, and since his attempt to connect Book of Mormon narrative to specific episodes in Smith's life and environment comprises the largest part of this biography, those superficial readings make for an overwhelming debility in the book. For example, the first chapter of Mosiah, which for Vogel is the first section of the current Book of Mormon that Smith fabricated, contains a reference back to the Nephi portion that Vogel claims was not yet written. Referring to the "sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now" (Mosiah 1:6) recorded on the plates that Benjamin is transferring to Mosiah, Benjamin says, "I would that ye should remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God that ye may prosper in the land according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers" (Mosiah 1:7). The first instance we have of this promise is recorded in 1 Nephi 2:20, where Nephi is promised that "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise, yea, even a land which I have prepared for you." According to Vogel, Benjamin is referring back to a promise that has not been composed, yet the Benjamin passage specifically refers to the promises made to the fathers. Vogel even connects these two passages from Nephi and Benjamin, but he

does not seem aware that they pose a problem to his theory that needs to be explained. Vogel makes a speculative leap about this promise, referring to Lehi's version in 2 Nephi 1:20:

> This not only explains the cyclical events of Nephite history but gives definition to Joseph Sr.'s financial reversals, the ebb and flow that the history of the Smith family took. Joseph Jr. must have believed it was his father's Universalism and lack of concern for the commandments that brought periodic hardship to the family. In later years, Lucy would shift the blame for her family's misfortunes to evil and designing men. In Joseph's mind, this would not have been possible if his father had been more diligent in obeying God's commandments. (p. 409)

Not only does Vogel connect the Book of Mormon passage to an event he invents because he believes he can read Joseph Smith's mind independent of traditional historical traces, but he also misses the fact that the passage creates a problem for his theory of Book of Mormon origins. Vogel even refers the reader to Mosiah 1:7 without seeing the challenge this passage poses to his ideology.

Vogel might say that Smith vaguely remembers the promises made to the fathers from the Lehi materials lost by Martin Harris. But he has already argued against such an *ad hoc* apology; the introduction to 2 Nephi is so vague, he says, that it "hints that Smith had limited recall of the historical material in the lost manuscript and was still uncertain about what the religious content would be" (p. 407).

A similar passage from Alma 9:13 poses the same problem to Vogel's hypothetical construct. Speaking to the people at Ammonihah, Alma reminds them of the promises made to a specific father: "Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? And again it is said that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord." If the Mosiah passage referred generally to the promises made to the fathers, this Alma passage clarifies by telling us that one of the fathers was Lehi; in other words, the passages demonstrate a one-sided lit-

erary dependence. The Alma and Mosiah passages point back to the Nephi and Lehi passages. It would take an oddly contorted argument to assert that Nephi and Lehi—supposedly written later—are quoting Benjamin and Alma because Benjamin refers to the promises made to the fathers and Alma refers specifically to Lehi as the source of the promise. Vogel does not engage the issue of how Alma could quote from a passage that Smith had not yet written if Smith really had no idea how that part of Book of Mormon narrative would develop. Vogel suppresses or represses textual evidence contrary to his ideology.

If there were plates, composition order does not matter much. Whether Smith started translating from 1 Nephi or from Mosiah, the process is sustained by those plates. An allusion or reference back to the Nephi material is intended by Mormon or some other writer, not Smith. But allusions or quotations to the Nephi material in the Mosiah–Moroni portion generate a problem for Vogel because for him this material has not been written yet and he does not permit time for Smith to rewrite or research earlier portions of the manuscript to harmonize with "later" material (p. xix).

In Mosiah 1—the first chapter written, according to Vogel—Benjamin teaches Mosiah in verse 7 how he and his people can prosper in the land. That key word *prosper* comes up later in the chapter when Benjamin turns the sacred objects over to his son: plates of brass, Nephi's plates, Laban's sword, and the Liahona, the last of which led the "fathers through the wilderness" according to the "*heed* and *diligence*" which they paid to God's word (Mosiah 1:16) and stopped functioning when they no longer paid heed and diligence to the ball so that "they did not prosper nor *progress* in their journey" (Mosiah 1:17). Here Benjamin is alluding to another story that, in Vogel's version, has not yet been written.

After losing the use of their bows while traveling in the Arabian wilderness, the group falls to murmuring. When Nephi rallies them, they consult the ball: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the *faith* and *diligence* and *heed* which we did give unto them" (1 Nephi 16:28). Benjamin is not referring back to some vaguely remembered

narrative, as Vogel would have it, but is using *Leitwörter* here, key words that are intended to point the reader back to the earlier passage. The ball or compass works according to the "*faith* and *diligence* which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by *small means* the Lord can bring about *great things*" (1 Nephi 16:29), for Nephi consults the ball, which tells him where to hunt—which he does successfully. Between the Mosiah 1 and 1 Nephi 16 passages we have three specific correspondences: the ball, the key words *heed* and *diligence*, and the small things that result in great works. The Mosiah passage has just the Liahona and the *heed* and *diligence* elements that permit the earliest generation of Nephites to prosper in their journey. This is the kind of complicated allusion that Vogel says Smith did not have time to create, and the Mosiah passage intentionally points the reader to what it assumes is a prior narrative.

Benjamin is not the only Book of Mormon writer who alludes to this passage that Vogel claims had not yet been written. Alma also refers to the compass, giving the traditional name by which it was known by the Nephites, the Liahona (Alma 37:38). He urges his son to follow the example of his fathers, for this Liahona "did work for them according to their *faith* in God" (Alma 37:40). But often the fathers did not receive the blessings "because [although] those miracles were worked by *small means* it did show unto them *marvelous works*. They were slothful and forgot to exercise their *faith* and *diligence* and then those *marvelous works* ceased, and they did not *progress* in their journey" (Alma 37:41). Alma ends up turning this compass and its spindles into a symbol for his son further in the chapter. But earlier in the chapter he expands the "small means" to refer to the records kept by the Nephites so that they could preserve memory (Alma 37:6–7).

These passages by Benjamin and Alma owe their meaning to a one-sided literary dependence that is manifestly more complicated than Vogel's simplistic theory of composition.

Another passage that undermines Vogel's contentions is Ether 12:22. There Moroni lists previous figures who exercised great faith. Included are Book of Mormon luminaries such as Ammon and his missionary partners, Alma and Amulek, the brothers Nephi and Lehi,

and the brother of Jared. "And it is also by *faith* that my *fathers* have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles" (Ether 12:22; I read "these things" to be the stories of faith conveyed in the Nephite records). Moroni seems to be alluding to Enos 1:13, in which verse Enos prays that if the Nephites are destroyed, the Nephite records will still be kept and preserved for the Lamanite descendants. The Lord grants the desire (Enos 1:12), and Enos requests that if the Nephites "by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites . . . that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps they might be brought to salvation" (Enos 1:13). Enos receives this promise because of his great faith (Enos 1:15) and because this promise was earlier given to Enos's fathers for "thy *fathers* have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their *faith,* for their *faith* was like unto thine" (Enos 1:18; 1 Nephi 15:14; 2 Nephi 3:12 and 30:5 seem to be passages Enos refers to containing the promises made to the fathers). Moroni refers to a specific passage (perhaps passages) that, according to the Vogel chronology, had yet to be written.

In another example, Alma 3:14–17 cites words to Nephi about Lamanites being cursed with a mark in 2 Nephi 5:21–22; again, the Alma passage cites these as "the words which [God] said to Nephi" (Alma 3:14). Vogel wants us to believe that Alma is referring to passages that had not been written yet. Alma 36:20–26 also poses a serious problem, for Alma quotes Lehi directly (1 Nephi 1:8). Brent Metcalfe advances a stunningly wrongheaded argument in this regard:

> Alma's declaration, "*methought I saw,* even as our father Lehi saw, *God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God*" (Alma 36:22; emphasis added), parallels almost verbatim the account of Lehi's vision in the small plates, "[Lehi] saw the heavens open, and *he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God*" (1 Ne. 1:8 emphasis added). A case can be made from a traditionalist perspective

> that Alma is quoting the small plates. From a critical viewpoint it can be maintained that 1 Nephi 1:8 quotes Alma 36:22.[148]

Notice that through his use of passives and modals, Metcalfe never actually takes responsibility for this argument. This is sleight of hand, juggling; Metcalfe neglects to address the conspicuous issue that the Alma passage actually refers to its source. Maintaining that it is the original being quoted is hard to do when it broadcasts its origin. A case can be made that the Alma material is the original being quoted, but not one that Metcalfe is willing to endorse. Here are the two passages:

Alma 36:22	**1 Nephi 1:8**
Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourse of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there.	And being thus overcome with the Spirit, [Lehi] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

Metcalfe's assertion is disingenuous because if the Nephi passage were quoting the Alma passage, the Alma passage specifically states its belatedness. While Metcalfe does not address the problem posed by this passage, Vogel never bothers to engage the question in any form at all: how could Alma cite a passage almost verbatim that would be composed months in the future? Vogel has already stated that Smith did not have time to cross reference one passage to another.

Book of Mormon superficialists such as Dan Vogel, Brent Metcalfe, Susan Staker, Fawn Brodie, and even lesser lights (such as William Morain and Robert Anderson) need to move from a reductive mode to a complex mode of textual analysis. Professional training in a philologi-

148. Brent Lee Metcalfe, "The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology,* ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 417 n. 26.

cal discipline (philosophy, literary criticism, biblical criticism, classics) might help Book of Mormon minimalists overcome their complexity complex in this regard. Their presuppositions, which incorporate a type of positivism and for ideological reasons assume the text to be superficial, I dub methodological superficialism. Vogel and his ideological compatriots need to come to grips with the superficialism of their methodology rather than just assuming its adequacy.

Contributions of Vogel's Biography

Besides demonstrating a fundamental inability to read a complex text in a sophisticated way—even to make the most basic distinction between a simplistic and a textured and dense text—Vogel's biography does have some favorable qualities. He makes extensive use of source material, some of which he himself has made available to researchers. Historians place a high value on the use of archival or primary source materials, and Vogel has done much to bring some of the sources to light.

As Vogel tries to match Book of Mormon passages with events in Joseph Smith's life, he provides a couple of credible parallels. The similarity in wording between the title page and 2 Nephi 26:12–13 is one such parallel (pp. 426–27); another one compares Doctrine and Covenants 10:67–68 and 3 Nephi 11:32–40 (p. 293).

But Vogel engages in circular reasoning when he hypothesizes fraternal conflict in the Smith family. The only (question-begging) evidence of such conflict is in the Book of Mormon, especially the stories of Nephi. For Vogel, that means that Joseph Smith's brothers might have threatened to kill him, might have tied him up, or might have otherwise done terrible things to him when he was a child or a youth. Although there is no documentary evidence of such events, the supposed psychological remnants of that violence percolate to the surface in the Book of Mormon. Vogel merely has to invent the evidence. But Vogel also posits other strife in the Smith family; Freudian theories of psychology (the main theories used in psychohistories) depend on a particular view of human nature

positing internal and external conflict, especially conflict within families. Freudian theories work better if the biographer can generate more strife in a subject's life, so the psychohistorian has a vested interest in exaggerating family struggle. In chapter five, entitled "A Family Divided," Vogel is on slightly more solid ground than when discussing brotherly conflict; he finds struggle between Joseph Sr. and Lucy over her joining the Presbyterian church. He places himself with Marvin Hill and against Richard Bushman on how much conflict was present in the family (pp. 571–72 n. 60) over this issue. Vogel sees in Lucy's desire to have her family churched and Joseph Sr.'s resistance to being churched conflict so strong that it threatened to destroy the family. If this chapter of Vogel's book contains all the evidence extant about the issue, however, the logical leap seems one founded on considerable faith. A disagreement does not yet make for a family divided or a family in crisis. One of the problems with psychohistory is that the most ordinary events in a historical actor's life can be made to carry tremendous importance to the biographer's thesis. These researchers could "find psychoanalytic meaning in the fact that Richard Nixon one day ate corned beef hash with an egg on it; the logical elasticity of psychoanalytic theory attempts to make a virtue of what G. K. Chesterton long ago recognized as the 'sin and snare' of biographers: the tendency 'to see significance in everything; characteristic carelessness if their hero drops his pipe, and characteristic carefulness if he picks it up again,'" something Stannard refers to as a soothsayer device, a form of circular logic.[149] At least in this instance, though, Vogel does not have to invent a previous causal event out of whole cloth in order to posit a second difference of opinion in the Smith family; and it appears that the disagreement is one subject to a fairly wide range of interpretation—Bushman seeing this religious divergence as relatively insignificant and Vogel seeing it as crucial in explaining Smith family dynamics and Joseph Jr.'s attempt to rescue his family by becoming a prophet.

149. Stannard, *Shrinking History,* 70.

Vogel's Shrinking Joseph Smith and Smallest Conceivable Book of Mormon

Closing his presentation at the Library of Congress Symposium on Joseph Smith, Richard Bushman claimed that biographies attempting to shrink Joseph Smith to less than he is have not accounted for the complexity of the man or the revelations he produced. "A small history will not account for such a large man."[150] Vogel turns the plentitude that is the Book of Mormon into a dearth, the scriptural copiousness into scarcity. The quality of a reading can never rise above the quality of the reader. Having a good reader of a text is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition to having a good reading.

Vogel's readings of the Book of Mormon are small not because the book is tiny but because his presuppositions and ideology are diminutive; a group cannot afford to have its scripture's least competent and most hostile readers setting the agenda on interpreting foundational texts. Meissner warns that psychobiography is particularly subject to problems of countertransference where the biographer transfers issues or emotions from his own psychological makeup onto the biographical subject. "The vulnerability of the method to these sources of distortion or coloring of the data is greatest at those points where the gaps in the material must be filled, or where the interpretation of certain behaviors or patterns of behavior comes under interpretive scrutiny."[151] Vogel has rejected the Mormon tradition and symbolically taken other fathers—Comte and Freud—but his approach is not adequate to deal with the Mormon past and Mormon scripture. Vogel's ideology and method are not up to the task of elucidating such a complex text, and he imposes his own crude and reductive ideas on the Book of Mormon. Combine this textual deficiency with philosophical naiveté, an undertheorized concept of historiographical writing, and ideological saturation, and Vogel's book is broadly inadequate. For a biography in which ideology is the overwhelmingly dominant ingredient, to show no awareness of

150. Richard L. Bushman, "Joseph Smith's Many Histories," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress,* ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Print Services, 2006), 18.

151. Meissner, "Methodological Issues," 187.

the function and nature of ideology severely hampers the effectiveness of a work of historical explanation. Performing simplistic readings is simple; complexity is difficult, and rare.